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NO.43 AUGUST 1987
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

The All-Singing, All-Dancing Magazine – it's

ACE – ADVANCED COMPUTER ENJOYMENT

WITH SUMMER SMASHES FROM

TAI-PAN (128)
Ocean

EXOLON
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MICRONAUT ONE
Nexus

THE BIG SLEAZE
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THE SPECTRUM+3 – WHAT'S ITS FATE?

VOTE 87
The CRASHTIONNAIRE RESULTS

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

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CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE 43 AUGUST 1987

FEATURES

REGULARS

DO IT YOURSELF

The new Spectrum – what's it's fate?





The oriental 128 Smash

An exclusive look at Incentive's amazing new 3-D technique FREESCAPE, on page 100

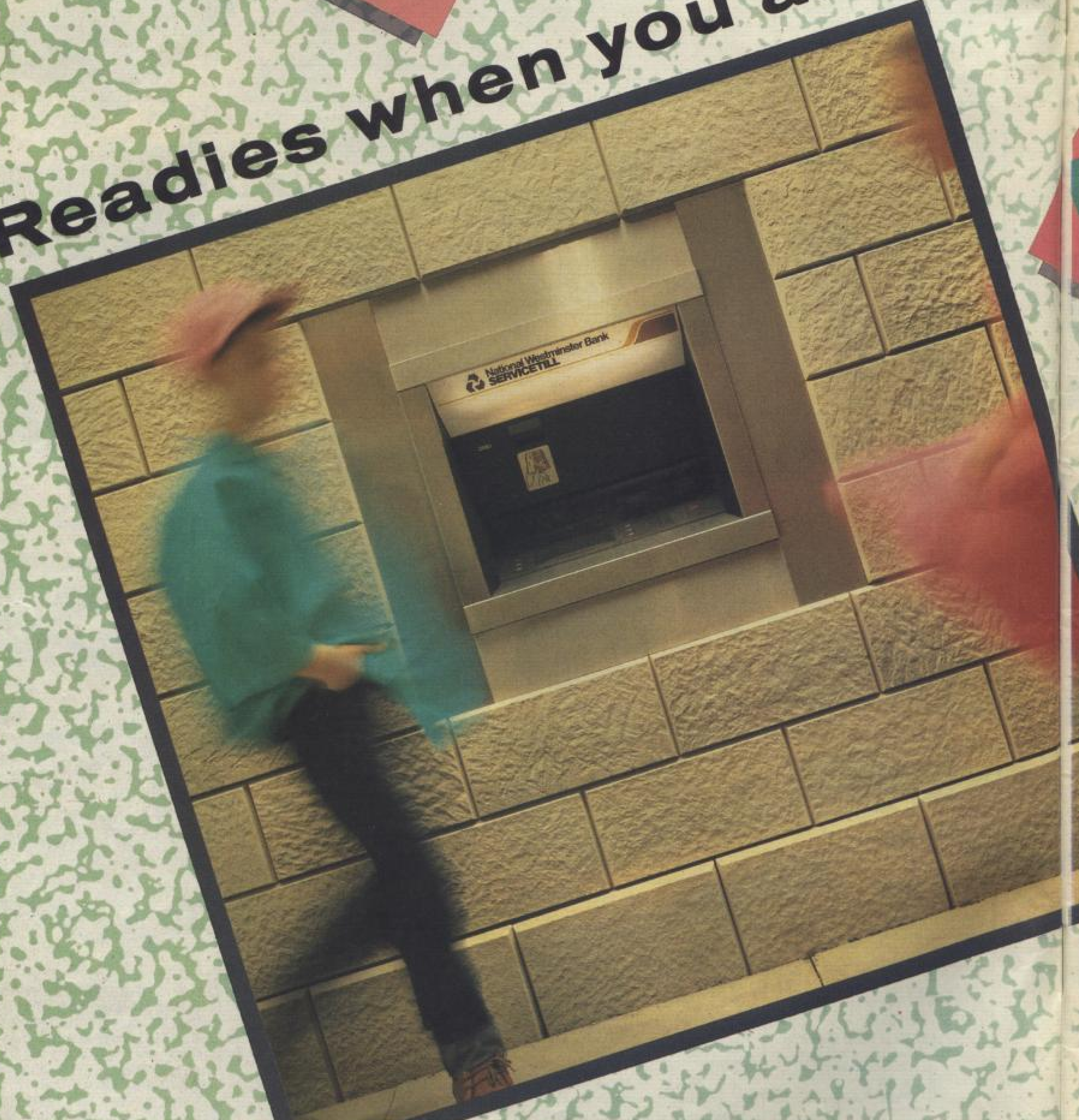


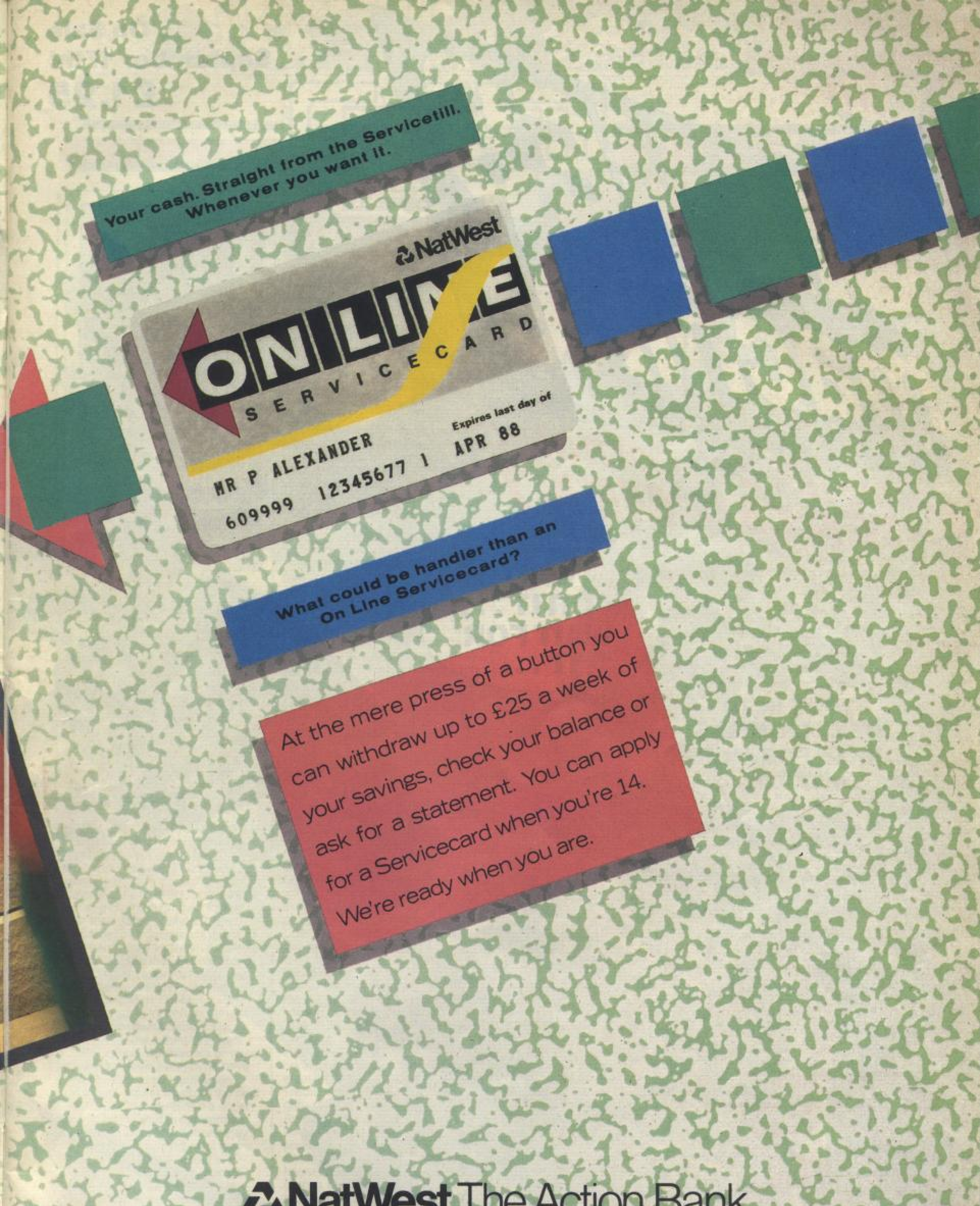
Comparisons return in RUN IT AGAIN



The next CRASH from platform four will be leaving on 27 August, calling at all stations between Ludlow and the world in general. Passengers are advised that there is no dining car on this service, but the buffet's quite good and the sandwiches, though a touch dry, have delicious and colourful fillings. If you miss this CRASH you might just miss the bus. Thank you (click).

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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM



This issue of CRASH is dedicated to the memory of Fred Astaire, who died recently in Hollywood. Videos are now introducing his many films to generations unborn when he was in his prime. Astaire was not only one of the finest dancers, but also a great entertainer and man who always strived to perfect his skills – an example to us all.

FREEWHEELING

HOW OFTEN have you heard it said that programmers have reached the limits of what the Spectrum can do? I can remember, from the dim distant days of early CRASH, software houses claiming on their inlays that their game pushed the machine to its outer limits – though that hardly counts, they've always said things like that. But it was felt that Ultimate approached those nebulous limits with each new game, and with *Tir Ná Nog* Gargoyle looked as though they had exceeded the limits, which to some extent thay had.

Since then, the barriers erected largely by advertising hype have been broken again and again. However, during much of the past 12 months I've detected a wider appreciation that programmers feel there's not much more they can do to go beyond what has already been done, and it's a situation recognised by games-players in so many letters. The recognition is probably inspired more by the plethora of conversions and tie-ins, few of which do justice to their original source, let alone attempt to push a computer to its processing capacity. A feeling of complacency and of stagnation has seeped in.

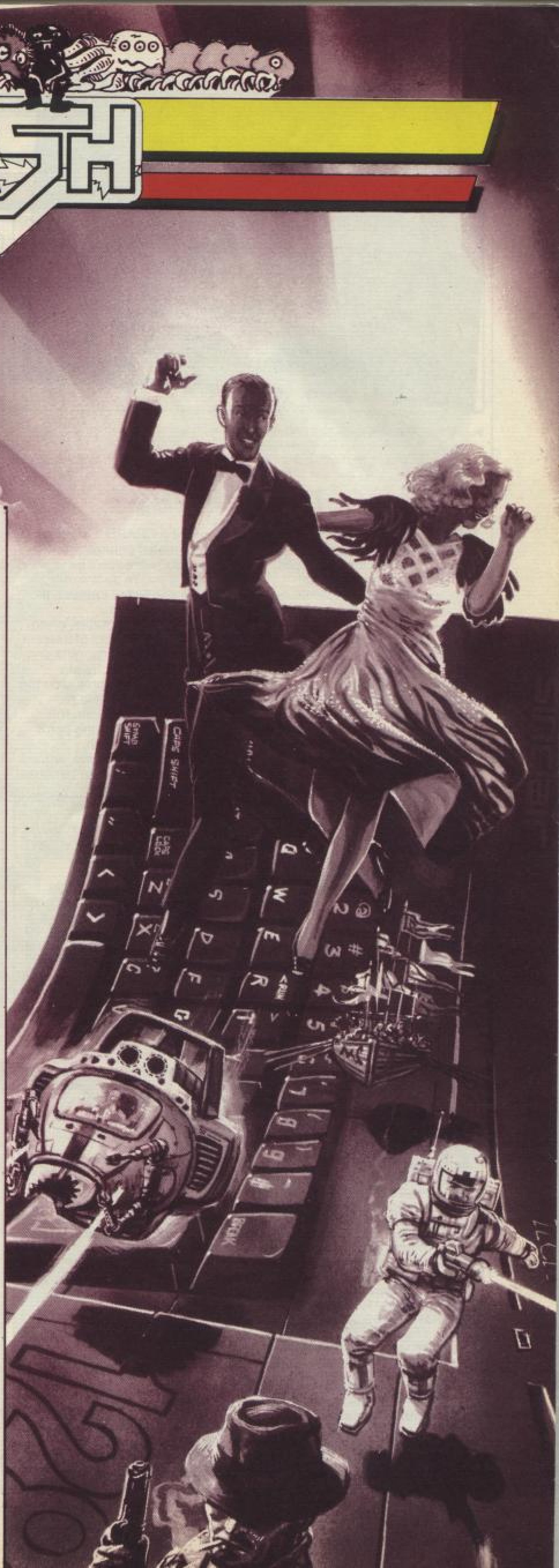
And yet, through improved techniques for compression of code, isolated programmers throughout Britain are still striving to make the Spectrum perform functions Sir Clive would never have dreamed of – and succeeding.

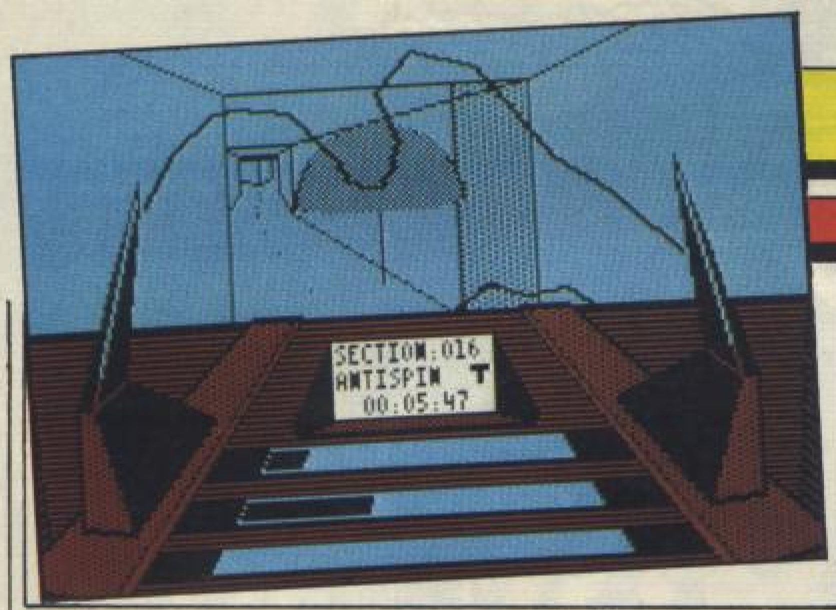
Such people at Incentive Software have been working for almost a year on **Freescape**, a 3-D presentation previewed on page 100. It's the first time the true complexities of vanishing-point perspective have been attempted with filled-in shapes. There have been plenty of 3-D games in the past using solids rather than wireframe, but none has ever gone as far as Incentive's Freescape. You could always get higher and look down slightly, but you could never go over that wall blocking your way as you can do with Freescape.

This isn't a technique for fast shoot-'em-ups because the processing capacity of even 128K isn't sufficient for high speed. That remains very much the province of games such as *Micronaut One*. But just think what avenues it opens for exploring games and strategy games such as *Lords Of Midnight*!

Freescape *is* a technique and not in itself a game. The first to be produced using Freescape is *Driller*, and whether or not that realises the full potential of the technique, and whether it's a good game or not, remains to be seen; but for those readers bemoaning the state of the industry, take heart – things are still happening on the Spectrum!

In fact, because of the innovative programs generated here, British software generally is enjoying a great vogue in the USA. Traditionally we've imported games from the States, and America (or Japan) has been considered the cradle of games-playing civilisation. The cradle's swinging. Many British software houses have recently found their games accepted by an increasingly excited American public. Now it's time for us to offer Americans our version of Advanced Computer Enjoyment, and it's innovations like Freescape that will help ensure British software a preeminent position on America's computer-store shelves in future months.





▶ **A typical tunnel network from** Micronaut One.

CLAP YOUR HANDS IF YOU BELIEVE IN FAIRNESS

THERE WERE dark words at the Towers over Robin Candy's review of *Micronaut One* (page 92). Nothing to do with the comment itself, you understand – it's just that Robin did design the fourth (and last) tunnel for the Nexus game, and some of us felt he was a bit too close to the product to assess it objectively. After all, the reasoning goes, we wouldn't ask Pete Cooke to review his own game, would we . . . ?

I suppose we might, out of curiosity, but we wouldn't present it as an unbiased view. And you can be sure that, in the future, whenever a CRASH writer has some personal connection with a piece of software you'll be warned about it. If you're *aware* of a possible conflict of interest, the problem is defused.

The real, undetectable, often unconscious conflicts of interest come over little things: gifts and free lunches from software houses, which may prejudice the reviewer. At CRASH we're cracking down on these, too.

Back to reviewing: the point extends beyond Robin. Programmers, designers, what have you probably aren't the best people to review software. There's a risk they'll look at it from too much of a technical view, an insider's view, thinking 'now what would *I* have done with this?' rather than taking the player's – potential buyer's – view.

Derek Brewster seems to be a happy exception to this rule, and looking at his ADVENTURE TRAIL (page 71) you'd hardly guess it's the author of *Kentilla* writing – in the right hands, behind-the-scenes knowledge can broaden a reviewer's view rather than constrain it.

ROGER KEAN
BARNABY PAGE

CRASH DEMO CASSETTE

ON THE OCTOBER COVER (Issue 45) you'll find a cassette containing some great games demos, playable levels of releases due during October and November from major software houses. The cassette isn't exactly free – it's an EXTRA – because the October Issue will cost £1.50, but we promise you won't be disappointed.

It's still too early to give away all the tape's secrets, but expect to see lead games from companies like Elite Systems, Gremlin Graphics, Incentive, Martech, Mirrorsoft, Melbourne House, Ocean, Thalamus and US Gold. The offering from Thalamus (no secrets here) will be *Delta*, the Spectrum conversion of Stavros Fasoulas's hit C64 game.

Issue 45 goes on sale as the PCW Show opens, and will reflect all the glitz and excitement of that event in the demos. Definitely an issue *not* to miss. More details on the cassette contents next month!

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

SOFTWARE REVIEWED

IN NEXT MONTH'S CRASH

CRASH CHALLENGE ARRIVES!

Don't say we don't listen to you! By popular demand CRASH finally gives in and arranges the first ever Games Challenge between a reader and a reviewer. Even now the shortlist is being examined for a luckless challenger to come to Ludlow to face the arcade might and playing power of . . . (see next issue).

HOME GROWN SOFTWARE

The popular do-it-yourself column returns when tape-wader Mike Dunn delves into the programming skills and games designing abilities of the CRASH man in the street.

PLUS . . .

Following our preview of Mattel's Nintendo, we have a look at another contendo, Sega's Master System, together with some of the available cartridge software. Richard Eddy previews the event of the year, the 10th Personal Computer World Show – who will be there and what will they be showing? And of course there's all the regular favourites, loads of reviews and some exciting competition opportunities.

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SOFTWARE CARES

MONTY MOLE is running for a good cause this summer as the software business loads up for charity.

Most attention has gone to *Backpack*, a ten-game £9.99 compilation scheduled for release around 1 September. (The compilation's official name is *Kidsplay*.) The *Backpack* organisers, led by Activision's Rod Cousens and Gremlin boss Ian Stewart, hope to raise some £270,000 for the National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children (the *Back* bit in the title stands for *Bat*tle *a*gainst *c*ruelty to *k*ids). That's enough to set up a new Child Protection Team – a 24-hour service which responds to urgent problems like child abuse.

They've got a strong line-up to challenge the *Soft Aid* compilation, which held Number One in the charts for three months in 1985 and pulled in £350,000 for Bob Geldof's Ethiopian famine-relief. And the *Backpack* team, calling themselves Kids Aid, can also take encouragement from the success of last year's antidrug compilation *Off The Hook*, which has raised some £70,000 so far.

Cousens hopes to sell more than 20,000 *Backpack*s on the Spectrum alone – and every copy adds to the charity's coffers. (Distributors and retailers will be allowed to make a small profit on the game. Otherwise, Cousens fears, they couldn't afford to handle it.)

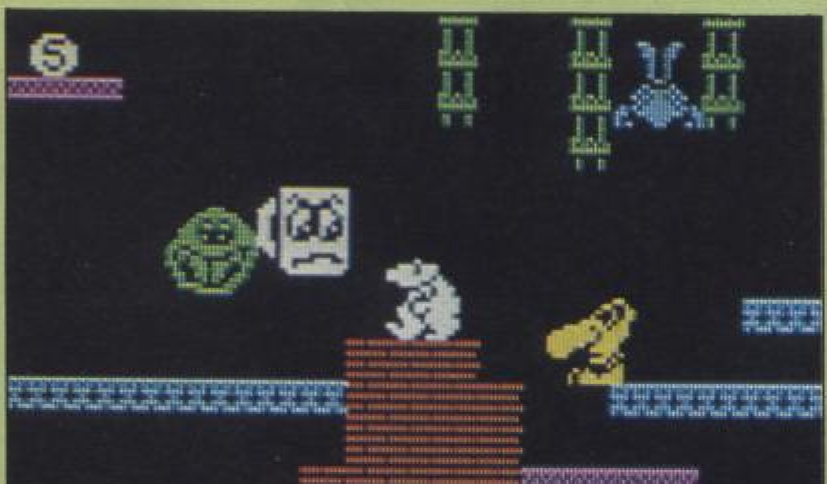
On the Spectrum, *Backpack* comprises: *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* (US Gold), *Deactivators* (Ariolasoft), *Lunar Jetman* (Ultimate), *Mailstrom* (Ocean), *Marsport* (Gargoyle), *Monty On The Run* (Gremlin), *Night Gunner* (Digital Integration), *Starion* (Melbourne House), *Starstrike* (Realtime) and *Xeno* (A'n'F Software).

Other charities have discovered the high profile – and high returns – of the micro world. For instance, War On Want is asking software houses for unwanted stocks of games, which it'll sell at the ZX Microfairs and other shows to support its Third World antipoverty work. War On Want discovered the industry last year when it raised some £10,000 with the *WOW Games* compilation.

The London-based fanzine *Compute* donates its profits to groups like Children In Need and Ferry Aid (see future FANZINE FILEs). In Cwmbran, Wales, the computer shop Soft Centre hopes to raise at least £500 in August for medical research to help children. And when the St John Ambulance Brigade celebrated its centenary recently, Ocean obliged with 10,000 pieces of software for underprivileged kids.

The software houses will go a long way to emptying people's pockets – but this summer they're giving a bit back.

► **Reach for the charts:** *Monty On The Run* **is part of the** *Backpack/Kidsplay* **charity compilation**



LOOK SHARP AND B#

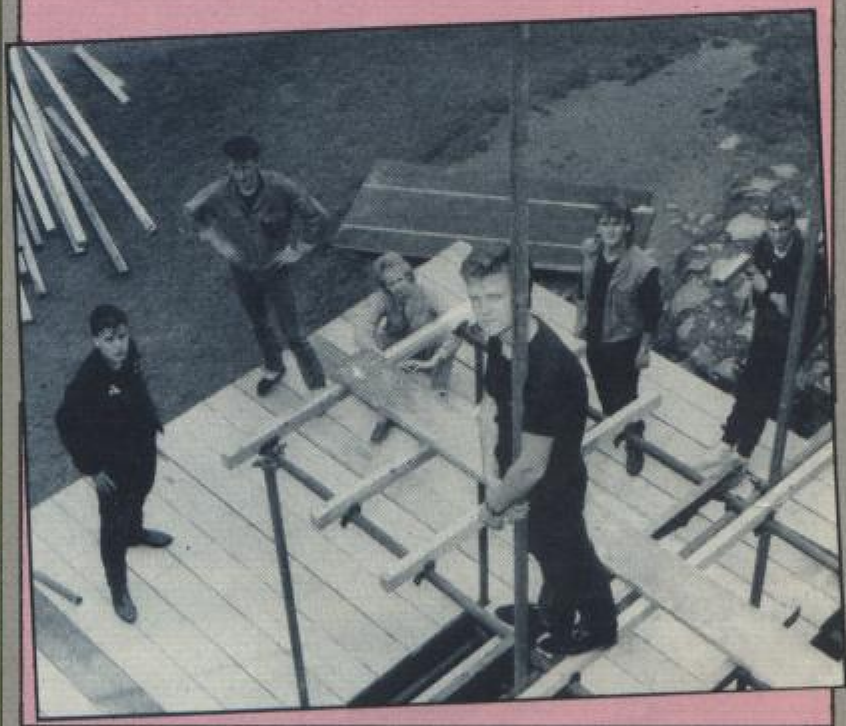
RETURNING to the pages of CRASH because he 'needs the money', fave Ludlow heart-throb Robin Candy has gone and got himself into a local band by the totally awesome name of **Adlib To Fade** (known in typographical circles as **Adlib To** Fade).

After working under the yoke of Roger 'Trevor Horn' Kean for several months, Rob bought himself a spanking new Yamaha DX21 and is now spouting the joys of Low Frequency Modulators.

Adlib To *Fade* consists of six members and has been together for some six months. Fresh from their first gig at little Leominster, at which the crowd went wild with delight, the Adlibbers have decided to take the summer off and work on new material, preparing to launch themselves on an unsuspecting world sometime around September.

As Robin pointed out over a carrot salad by the poolside of his adobe-style West LA home, any record producers reading this should sign up **Adlib To** Fade immediately because 'we're Ludlow's premier band and leave the likes of U2 and Curiosity gasping in admiration'.

Pictured here are the infamous **Adlib To** *Fade* lads themselves posing around Ludlow Castle. From left to right are Jonathon Harris (bass), Jonathon Howard (guitar and blisters), Jason Howard (keyboard and earrings), Andrew Thomas (drums and wrecked cars), Lee Watkins (guitar, vocals and perms) and last but by no means least Robin Candy (keyboard, vocals and money).



► **Swede and low: the very lovely Hunter S Minson with his Scandinavian bride Madeleine Kihlberg. They're married this month. That explains why Minson's being going to Stockholm so much recently . . .**



THE BUG THAT ROARED

The dark side of FANZINE FILE – how one small mag shook the software giants

THREE YEARS seems like forever in an industry where 1984 is 'ancient history'. And for a fanzine three years is more than ambitious; it's well nigh impossible. But this summer four North London fanzine editors are trying to hold off the end of a three-year era – the end of the small, smudgy but outspoken *Bug* cutting a swath through the software jungle.

What could a team of teenagers write that would alarm the industry so much that Gargoyle Games struck them off its mailing list for review copies?

Gargoyle slammed *The Bug*'s 'extreme political views' in its letter to the fanzine in February 1986. And *The Bug*'s controversial break with Creative Sparks Distribution (CSD) in May was certainly over its strong content, whoever you believe.

The stories differ. *The Bug*'s editors charge that CSD, its distributors, objected to the fanzine's review of their Commodore game *Cyber I* (on the Super Sparklers label) in *The Bug*'s April issue. But CSD Managing Director Henry Kitchen gave *CTW* (*Computer Trade Weekly*) another reason: the fanzine's language went too far, he felt.

'I couldn't justify supporting them,' Kitchen said after listing some mild swear words *The Bug* had allegedly used.

POLITICAL BROADSIDES

The Bug has never kept its views to itself. Though most amateur computer mags put their effort into visual presentation, *The Bug*'s six-by-eight-inch pages have limited it to a drab standardised format without sophisticated artwork.

So almost uniquely among fanzines it's based on words, on passionate and often well-written text which rarely indulges in the puerile fooling of many fanzines. And as well as reviewing games, *The Bug* tackles the issues: the merits of marketing, the legal obligations of software shops.

Sometimes *The Bug* is coloured by controversial politics, too. Its reviews of *Falklands 82* and *Battlefield Germany* harshly criticised the warlike PSS mentality. And what upset Gargoyle was a *Bug* ad attacking Rupert Murdoch's treatment of his News International print workers – an ad placed by *The Bug*'s editors themselves.

Even now, as *The Bug* plans a series on famous people and computers, they won't print the Prime Minister's contribution – because 'it's a Party Political Broadcast by the Tory Party,' according to coeditor Jaron Lewis.

And in a recent letter to *CTW*, Lewis and his fellow *Bug* founder Jeffrey Davy pontificated on sexism in games ('*Mag Max* stars a MALE, *Greyfell* stars a MALE cat . . .').

So it was no wonder that when the break with CSD came, Lewis and Davy leaped into the argument with a press release, a diatribe against the software industry in *CTW* – and some damning allegations against CSD.

'We did have a contract with CSD, which they broke,' says Lewis. 'They didn't seem to think very much of the contract.' *The Bug* had a hard time getting CSD to give them their usual 250 copies from the 1,500 print run of that contentious April issue. And the distributors added insult to injury, Lewis alleges, when CSD executive Leigh Richards hung up on the two editors.

THE GOODNESS OF THEIR HEARTS

CSD, after their first criticisms of *The Bug*'s 'growing pains', were anxious to play the issue down. 'The whole thing has been initiated by them,' says Managing Director Henry Kitchen. *The Bug* are trying to make mileage out of it.'

Certainly CSD sought neither fame nor fortune from their brief *Bug* sponsorship, which started last Christmas. The company based in Farnborough, Hampshire had only an unobtrusive credit at the end of *The Bug* – yet they met printing costs of some £1,200 an issue. And most copies of the 40p *Bug* were distributed by CSD through its software retailers, too; the fanzine had only a few for subscriptions, schools and friends.

'Sponsorship is something we do because it's helpful to people,' explains Kitchen. 'Whenever we've given something we give it – and we don't feel the need to shout about it.' So his colleague Richards won't name CSD's other fanzine sponsorships, which he describes as done 'out of the goodness of our hearts'.

Pressed on the *Bug* issue, Kitchen admits 'the magazine was not what we expected and that's why we pulled out'.



▶ **'Extreme political views': left to right, Danny Marcus, Jeffrey Davy and Jaron Lewis of *The Bug***

PHOTO: *London Daily News*/ **Syndication International**



▶ **The acceptable face of software?: CSD's Henry Kitchen**

PHOTO: *Computer Trade Weekly*

'BY AND FOR CONSUMERS'

And there it is. *The Bug* has gone back to photocopying; they've found two software-industry sponsors for their Issue 30, but nothing permanent; and as 'a magazine by and for consumers' they'll carry on arguing with the industry's faults.

'I expect we'll survive,' says Jaron Lewis. 'We've survived coming up to three years.' Davy even sees a silver lining in the CSD cloud: 'Looking forward now, it's going to be easier to survive, because we're more wary. We're looking more closely at things after CSD.'

While they're unsure about the date of their next issue – exams, as much as enemies, are holding the 15- and 16-year-olds up – *The Bug*'s editors plan to fund the fanzine without sponsorship, if necessary.

'Because advertising is immoral,' explains Davy light-heartedly, 'we're going for the *Bug* Adopt-A-Page scheme. They put forward a nominal sum (*£20 a page*) and put what they like on the page . . . so long as it's not sexist or racist or heterosexist.' Among the adopted pages in the next *Bug* is one bought by . . . CSD.

But here comes the crunch: does *The Bug* matter to the industry? One top marketing person observes: 'When the question comes down to it, 'would you advertise in that publication?', I'd say 'no'.'

And do *The Bug*'s reviews, positive or negative, make any difference to software sales? Or have their letters to the trade press and their pretensions to megamagazinedom (the Bug Publications UK 'newsroom' claims a News Editor and eight telephone lines on Jaron Lewis's one number . . .) given the issue a false importance?

KICKING THE TEETH THAT BITE THEM?

Most software houses feel that despite a recent boom in fanzines – one large company receives three or four a day – sending them review copies does more for goodwill than for good sales.

And Nexus's Ian Ellery voices a still-common suspicion: 'A lot of fanzines just set themselves up so they can get free software. It's worth their while – but not worth anybody else's while.'

The PR people agree, though, that *The Bug*'s the best and that review copies aren't wasted there. Jeffrey Davy, of course, backs them up – and believes a single fanzine *could* make a difference.

'The growing number of fanzines doesn't help anybody,' he says. 'We look in the CRASH FORUM, and every issue there's a letter saying 'me and a few friends are going to start a fanzine'. Hundreds of them . . . it's ridiculous. It's much better to get in touch with a working fanzine and work for them.

'The main problem is people who get software and haven't got the compulsion to carry on. Things like *Your Sinclair*'s Fanzine Of The Month are really bad, because it suggests you should start your own fanzine and send it in.

'People spend months making the fanzine really pretty and win the prize, and that's a kick in the face for the people who do it every month.'

BARNABY PAGE

To get *The Bug* contact BUG SUBS, *28 Leaside Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10 3BU*

Fear & Loathing



CHOC ICE AND SNAILS FOR DINNER

After having The Living Daylights frightened out of him, Minson offers his guide to decent dining on a budget in London . . .

Jehovah and his choir of angels, it sounds like the end of the world. The crack of doom has just opened up, and it's all happening right above my head. Could it be that they're mending the roof at last?

Still, it's all relatively subdued compared with *The Living Daylights*. *The Living Daylights* – The Movie, that is, and not the program because I doubt even Plus owners will be able to reproduce the deafening excess of the new James Bond epic.

Truly the boys from Domark are licensed to work wonders, so a week before Chuck and Di got to sample the joys of Timmy Dalton's dimple, everyone who's everyone in computer journalism trolled down to Pinewood studios for a super-exclusive preview of the film.

This was the full red carpet treatment, and being an arrogant swine I strode down the centre of the crimson stripe and marched into a buffet that made the Black Hole of Calcutta seem like an empty icebox. However somewhere between the sarnies and the champagne I did manage to make out a be-suited quintet of familiar faces. You can tell it's a big event when the whole Ludlow Mafia don their best whistles and make their way down to the smoke.

You'll be reading enough about *The Living Daylights* – The Game and The Movie elsewhere over the next few months. Enough to say that the former looks like it follows the latter extremely closely and that the latter is a damned sight better than any of old Eyebrow's attempts. Timothy Dalton is a return to the traditional Bond values of a tough guy with ice-cool charm and a streak of sheer sadism.

Domark didn't miss a trick. Gourmet Dave Carlos even dished out King Cones before the show began. He looked so at home with the little tray perched on his midriff I wondered if this wasn't his true vocation. What with Q himself to introduce the movie and gifts of whistling keyrings, this was a contender for lavish launch of the year.

But there's more than one way of winning a journo than choking him with choc ices. An alternative route to a hack's heart is through his more finely tuned taste buds. Which is why Code Masters' invite to L'Escargot (that's The Snail for all you cunning linguists out there) was more than welcome.

'There's obviously money in £1.99 releases,' I whispered to the slinky editress of another publication (that's a T-zer for you) as I studied the menu. Sure enough, while we waited the ever-elegant (though no longer quite so eligible, if my sources are correct) Baxter confirmed my suspicions.

Michael, or Co-Co as those of us in the know call him, hit us with the facts straight away. The latest Gallup chart shows that Code Masters have the second largest market share in this country, which means that they're flogging an awful lot of cassettes.

Which is all very interesting if you're one of Maggie's brave new capitalists, but if you're more interested in loading bits than shifting units, the good news is that there are two new Spectrum releases on the way, to whit (to-woo) *Grand Prix Simulator*, an overhead race game with two player option, and (reviewed on page 25) *Super G-Man* (Gee!), a shoot-'em-up.

With the company also invading Germany and shooting up sales on the continent it looks like they have reason to be buying celebratory lunches. There's just one unanswered question.

Whose boots are those opposite? Did Baxtie wear them as he goose-stepped into Cologne? Or does his assistant, sexpot Sarah Donovan, have a penchant for riding kit? I think we should be told.. and in the latter case provided with photographic evidence.

Talking of riding crops, which we weren't, leads me to the man with the flattest crop this side of Vidal Sassoon's. Yes, I'm talking about Andy Wright, who obviously felt that I'd had too many of these gang bangs and so invited me out for an intimate tête-à-tête in a Hampstead wine bar.

Very little to whine about though because the food was excellent and as for the fruit of the vine . . . well, we were forced to imbibe a bottle and a half because, as Andy observed, 'I just can't get used to seeing you sober.'

► **O for a closer walk with Code Masters**



It was all perfectly innocent . . . or so I thought. But there was a reason for the hospitality. 'You're in the pay of Microprose, aren't you?' Wright asked. I tried to deny it but to no avail. 'Well, tell Wild Bill that we've got a message for him.'

It seems that nuclear simulations hold no terrors for Flat Top's troupe of crack commandos. They've got something special lined up, should the Major try to drop in, sitting on a bomb, Dr Strangelove style. Yes, Activision has completed its star wars defence while Ronnie still dithers about who gets to play Luke Skywalker.

High Frontier (which is a funny place to have an ear, but no worry) is a serious SDI simulation from master strategist Alan Steel, co-author of *Theatre Europe*, but that's unlikely to stop it getting flack from the lily-livered types who think wargames will turn you into mindless sadists. As Andy pointed out, nuclear destruction does not lead to victory.

But there's more! If that isn't enough to get Wild Bill trembling in his army boots, Activision has signed up Big Arnie himself – or rather Schwarzen-ham-and-egger's new movie, *Predator*. Andy had just seen it and reckons it's extremely gruesome . . . more stomach churning details soon.

But their final trick has been to call in the forces of the supernatural by signing up *Knightmare*, the new TV adventure game show from Anglia. This looks like it could be one of the biggest events in computer-related TV shows. None of your Micro Live, BBC nonsense . . . this is computing for fun.

You won't be able to thrill to the show until September, but you will be able to read all about it. Where? Well, let's save the best bits till last. A few weeks ago I was gagged, blindfolded and whisked away to a Birmingham bistro where the bearded Kidd swore me to secrecy before telling me about a new Newsfield magazine.

Swore me to secrecy? Well, I've never believed in 'off-the-record' information, so I'm going to blow the gaffe. **The Games Machine** will be looking at all those micros out there which aren't covered by CRASH and ZZAP!, and though there will be information on your eight-bit favourites you'll also be able to gen up on sixteen-bit wonders, games consoles and who knows what else . . .

Me! I know what else because I'll be playing a part in this exciting new project. So there'll also be . . . Hang on, the banging up above has stopped. What was that thud? It's a squadron of the the SAS. No it's Graeme! Honest, boss, I wasn't going to tell them about the . . . No!!! ARRGH!!! Well, I guess you'll just have to wait till September, otherwise Big G might break my other arm!

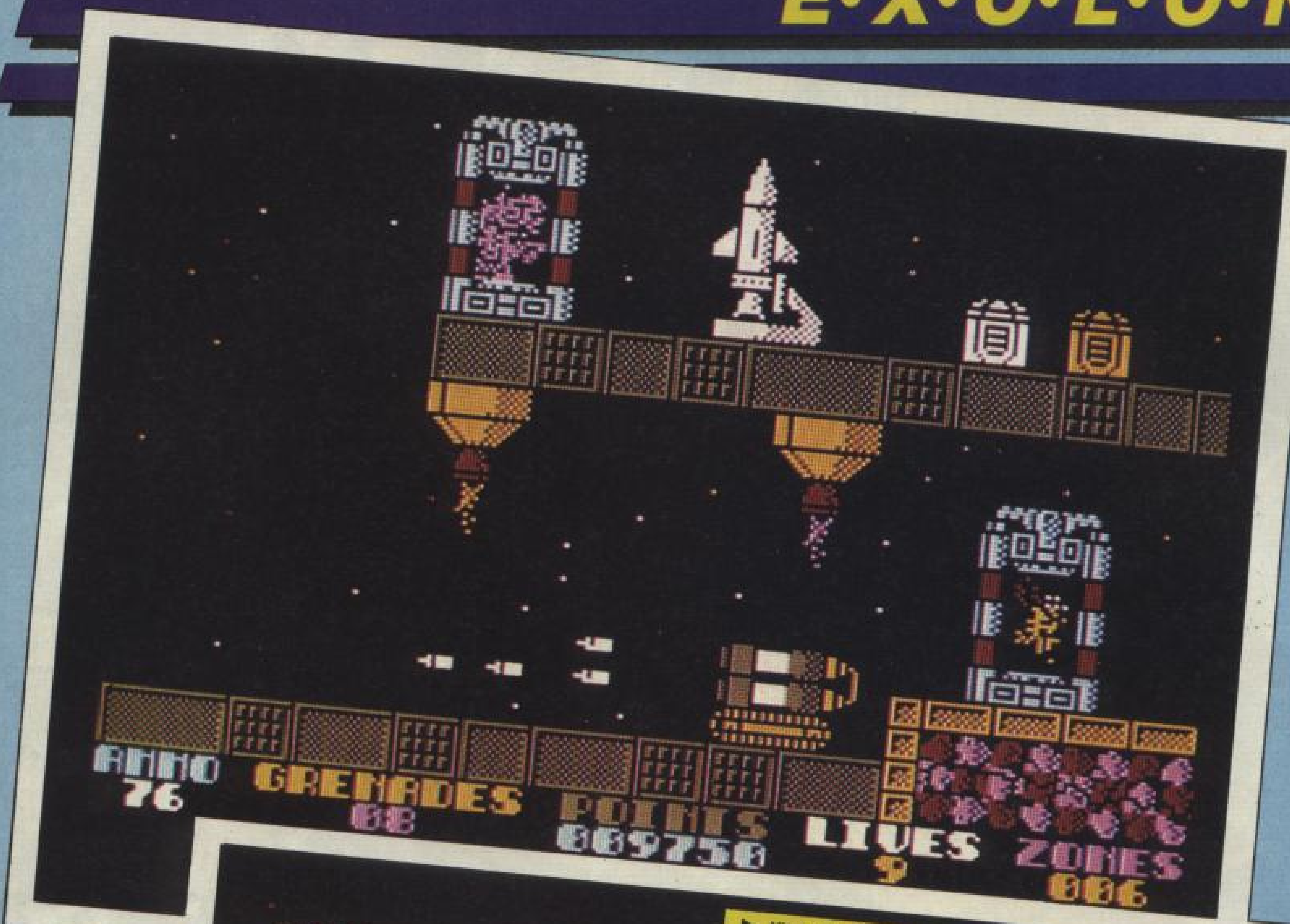
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E·X·O·L·O·N





► Vitorc The Besuited battles through screen after screen of highly colourful and explosive action in Hewson's latest high-tech shoot-'em-up



Producer: **Hewson**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Raffaele Cecco**

A CRASH Smash

With your great reputation as an eraser of aliens, you're employed to rid a planet of a mixed bag of beasties. You face a world infested with rotund attackers released from birth pods, homing missiles, accelerating space lice, exploding mines, and bum-pummelling hydraulic plungers.

For protection you carry a blaster to destroy the lesser, thin-skinned aliens and laser-beam barriers; grenades that take out stronger creatures, machinery, obstructing rock formations and mushrooms; and a pulse bomb that disrupts enemy security systems. Blaster ammunition and grenades are replenished with each loss of life, and extra supplies may be collected from arsenal boxes.

For additional safety, passing through a dressing unit clothes you in an exoskeleton, and thus besuited you have extra blast power and protection against ground mines and some aliens. But if you're wearing this suit when a level of 25 screens is completed, your bravery bonus falls from 10,000 points to only 1,000.

CRITICISM

" It's always nice to relax with a good shoot-'em-up, and Exolon is an excellently-presented game of this type. The graphics are highly detailed and colourful, and the movement is very smooth. Though it's very simple, it can keep you amused for hours – each screen presents the player with a host of new problems. Instantly playable and highly addictive, Exolon makes an excellent buy for shoot-'em-up fans. "

ROBIN

CRITICISM

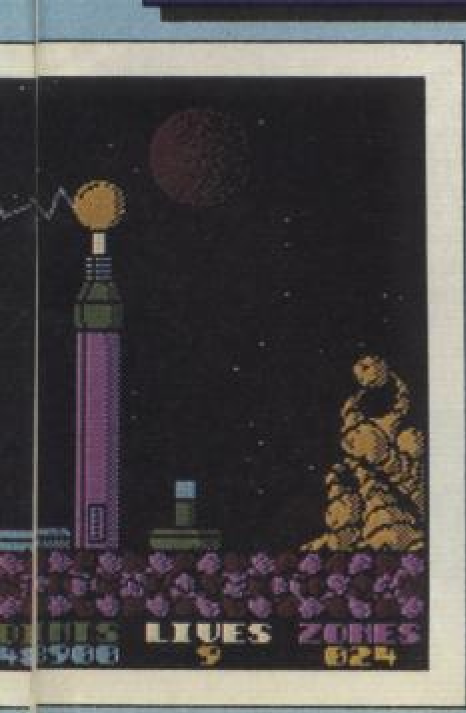
" Exolon is a very good, very playable, very addictive game. The graphics are terrific – the backgrounds and gun emplacements are very pretty. And the aliens are a real pain in the backside as they wander around the screen, killing you off at every opportunity. Overall Exolon is a highly competent space shoot-'em-up – go out and buy it. "

MARK

CRITICISM

" Hey! Exolon is a really good game! The graphics are superb, with excellent use of colour, and there's so much to do that it's sure to last for ages. The high-score table is big, one of the largest I've seen, and the options screen is nice and bright. The different guns, the teleports and bits of scenery that have to be shifted are all portrayed very prettily, and require different tactics; my personal favourite is the gun that fires on two levels at the same time. Brilliant! "

MIKE



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: excellent, on option screens as well as the game itself
Graphics: big, colourful and smooth
Sound: great tune and splendid FX on the 128, otherwise limited
Skill levels: one
Screens: 125
General rating: a well-presented traditional shoot-'em-up with plenty to do and look at – and a chance of bonus points at the end of the 128 version

Presentation	90%
Graphics	91%
Playability	91%
Addictive qualities	92%
Overall	90%

Reviews

SPACED OUT

Producer: **Firebird (Silver)**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Authors: **John Gibson, Steven Cain**

In deep space time hangs heavy for the robo boys tending their herds of Cybernetically Operated Wagons (COWS). But their dull existence is enlivened by space creatures that attempt to upset their progress through a rectangular space zone.

You have control of a robo boy, who can only move in straight, unobstructed lines; the object is to progress from the bottom left of the playing area to the top right. The amount you can move is decided by the roll of two dice, giving vertical and horizontal components. (Diagonal moves are impossible.)

After the first moves have been made, aliens emerge from the top right-hand corner and take up random positions. (You can choose how many aliens there are, within limits.) If you move onto a square occupied by an alien you space them out, but incur penalty points – and after you've made your move, the aliens reposition themselves. If they box you in, *you* are spaced out and suffer more penalty points.

And you have just one minute to complete each turn. The slower you are the more penalty points you earn, and if your penalty score grows larger than your handicap score the game is lost.

CRITICISM

● **" Bleugh!** Spaced Out **isn't much fun. The graphics are tiny and far from attractive, and I didn't find a scrap of entertaining material. This game isn't even worth £1.99 – incredible, considering its two authors are ex-Denton Designs. "**

MIKE

● *" When I first saw this game, I thought 'what the "!£%&'s going on here?'.* Spaced Out *is a weird strategy-type board game, and it takes a few plays to understand what's going on. The graphics on the gaming board are very basic, with fat, wobbling sprites chasing each other around the grid, though the backdrop and icon-choice panel are very pretty. But though it doesn't hold the interest for long,* Spaced Out *is quite playable. "*

MARK

● " This is easily the most original game I've seen in the last few issues. The concept is very strange, but fiendishly simple. It's reasonably presented, with a delightful background – though sadly there's only one. The main graphics of the play area are unimpressive and very small, but the animation is good. You can rely on Firebird to come out with something original once in a while. "

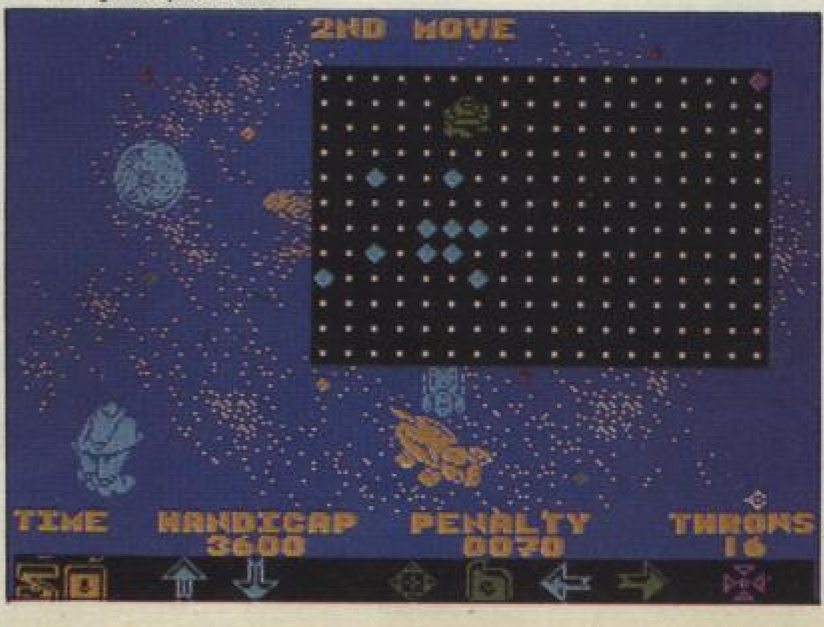
PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface II
Use of colour: good backgrounds, but poor in playing area
Graphics: characters so small they're worthless
Sound: bleeps and blips
Skill levels: player can choose size of playing area and number of aliens
Screens: one playing area of variable size
General rating: an original concept which doesn't work

Presentation	48%
Graphics	37%
Playability	37%
Addictive qualities	32%
Overall	38%

► **Herding cows on a draughtboard in space is the name of the game, but is the name of the game derived from the old hippie phrase for being 'stoned' or a pun on the older game** *Space Doubt* **?**



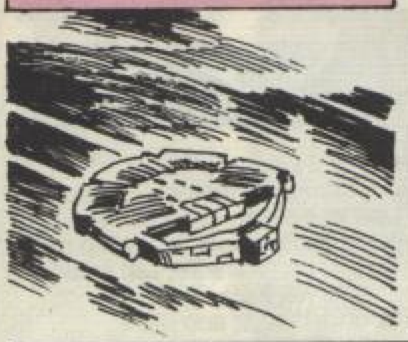
MUTANTS

Producer: **Ocean**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Choice Software**

From the turmoil of interstellar war springs a splinter group which plans to destroy the ultimate weapon system – Macrogenetic Mutoids, known as Mutants.

MIKE

" Though I managed to score 70 billion points in Mutants **without any effort at all, literally (see future PLAYING TIPS . . .), the game has no addictivity at all! The graphics are nice, and the smooth ship movement is excellent, but 'there's no point having pretty graphics if the game is naff', as the old saying runs. Ocean obviously hasn't got a copy** of Lloyd's Ludlovian Proverbs. **Not recommended. "**



The Mutants are contained in 15 test zones, which can be destroyed if the self-destruct components in each zone are collected and assembled in the 16th, the control zone. (When that's done you go on to the next level.)

You teleport to a test pen in *Rainbow Warrior*, a small one-man patrol ship. Each pen is surrounded by an energised surround which can destroy ships, and guarded by Mutants which can destroy one of the ship's three lives.

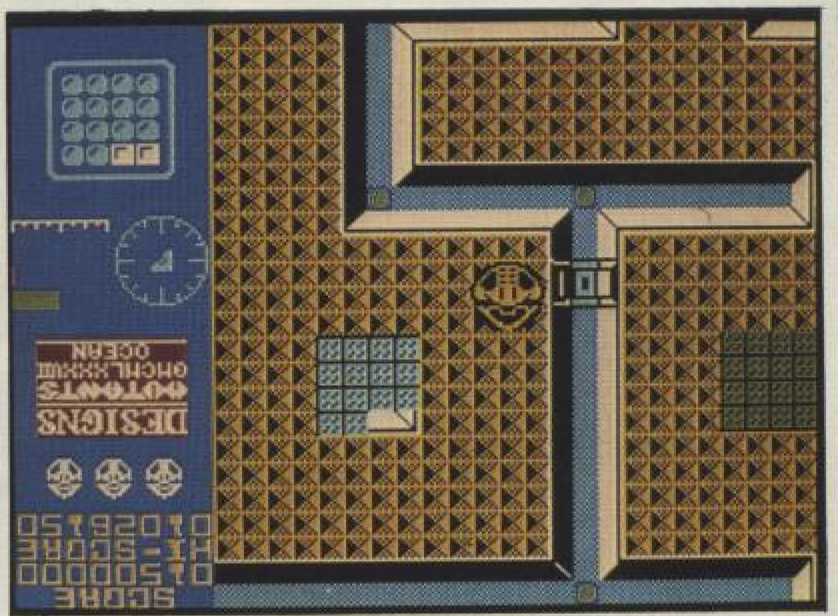
The Mutants can be taken out using the ship's three weapons systems – slow but big blasting missiles, rapid-fire low-level photon torpedoes, and barriers that provide a temporary shield. Only one system can be used at a time.

Components of the self-destruct device must be picked up and carried by teleporter out of the test zone and into the control zone. There you must find a way through its deadly walled corridors to the assembly point, where components can be deposited, the mechanism constructed and the universe saved as usual.

FACT: the Greenpeace environmentalists' ship sunk in New Zealand by French agents in 1985 was the . . . *Rainbow Warrior*. Shome coinshidenshe shurely?

ROBIN

" The use of an icon system sets the scene for what promises to be a sophisticated game – especially as it's from a Denton Designs concept. The loading screen is very good and overall presentation is up to the Ocean standard; the graphics are striking and colourful. But the use of biological terms to describe each Mutant (a bit pointless, except to high-level biology students) and a rough icon-selection system seem to be hiding the fact the Mutants **is basically a shoot-'em-up with a few extras chucked in. As shoot-'em-ups go it's playable but not compelling, and though it's a nice-looking game it's sadly lacking in gameplay. "**

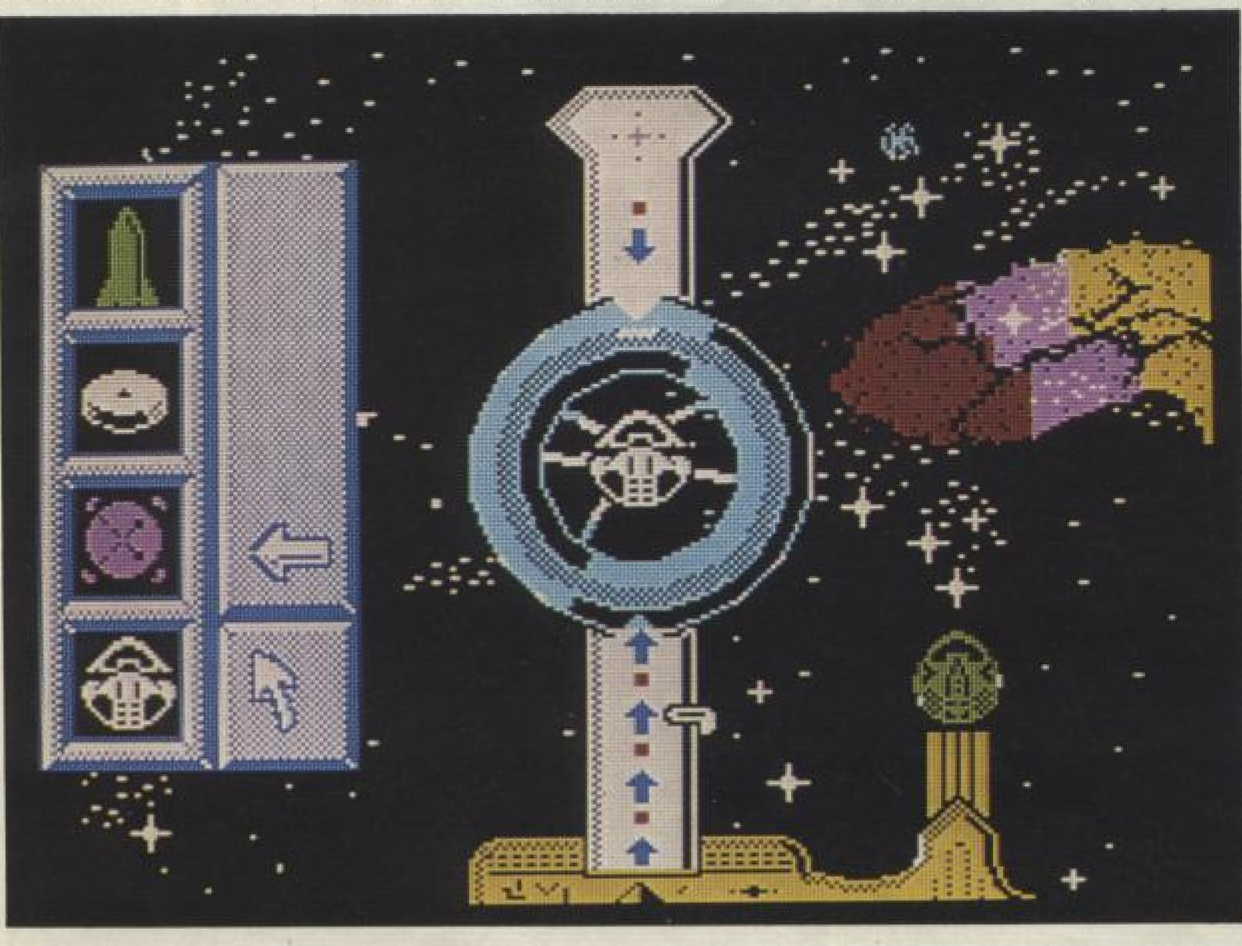


► **One of the game screens in *Mutants* – you're into the galactic dump where you deposit collected objects**

MARK

" My first reaction to Mutants **was positive, but after a while I started to realise that for all its pretty graphics and icon-selections it's just a basic shoot-'em-up with a difficult control system. The graphics are good, clear and well-defined, especially on the icon choice/launch screen, but sound consists of deafening silence (save for the inevitable blasting effects).** Mutants **is a good game let down by limited and repetitive gameplay. "**

► **The attractive main option screen from *Mutants*; from the icons you select fire power (top three) and start play (lower icon)**



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable and preset (Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, SPACE to fire)
Joystick: Kempston, Interface II
Use of colour: well used throughout
Graphics: very attractive
Sound: little except for a few sparse spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: constantly scrolling
General rating: initially interesting but offers little long-term challenge

Presentation	76%
Graphics	79%
Playability	60%
Addictive qualities	54%
Overall	58%

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TRIO

Producer: **Elite**
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Authors: **Various**

Compilations have been burgeoning recently, but Elite's *Trio* is different. All three games on this compilation are new.

First off there's the follow-up to Elite's successful TV licence *Airwolf*, not unsurprisingly titled *Airwolf II*. This sequel departs dramatically from reality as Stringfellow Hawke and his magnificent all-singing, all-dancing helicopter are sent to destroy a terrorising alien craft.

NICK

" Airwolf II is a real good shoot-'em-up, with all the playability of the original Airwolf and a lot of new features to keep you addicted. The sprites are well-defined and colour is used quite effectively. It's a fine follow-up to a brilliant game. But look out, world – Great Gurianos is another violent game! It seems all you have to do is pierce as much flesh as you can. The graphics and colour are quite effective, but the addictivity is almost nil, and this game will only appeal to the swordfight addicts. 3DC is more than JUST ANOTHER 3-D game – it's good. The scenario is fairly simple, but the special effects make this game worth a look; and there's a good tune at the beginning and a neat use of colour on the last screen. Trio is a really worthwhile compilation. "

BEN

" Basically a shoot-'em-up, Airwolf II follows in the flight path of Transmuter and Nemesis: flying through space (helicopters in space?) and blowing away as many blowawayable things as possible. It's trashable once you've had a couple of long goes. As for Great Gurianos, well, coin-op conversions are all well and good if the machines they're licensed from are okay. But Great Gurianos isn't. The conversion is full of flickery graphics and annoyingly erratic gameplay – killing or being killed has more to do with luck than skill. It may appeal to some, but I'd give it a miss. 3DC is a horribly corny title for an aquatic forced-perspective game, but it's not bad in the 'collect the bits to make something useful' style. The gameplay, ace effects and pretty graphics make this the best game of the package. "

The chopper can move in any direction within the two-dimensional onscreen space zone. Bulbous beasties, fighter craft, and space constructions with gun emplacements must be negotiated – and if you touch any you lose a life.

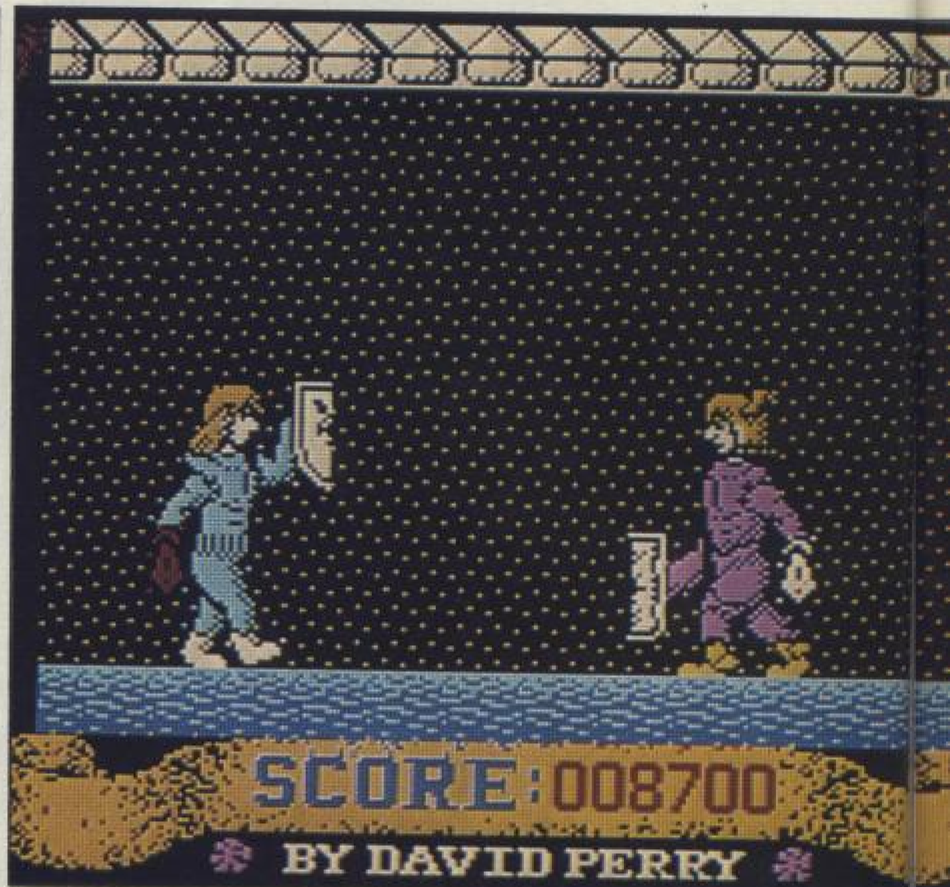
The helicopter is armed with a blaster, and Airwolf's fire power can be augmented by collecting rotating objects which spin across the screen.

In the second game, *3DC*, you're stranded on a wet, effluent-covered sea bed, and it's no fun unless you like that kind of thing. But escape from this traditionally isometric 3-D watery world is possible – if you can assemble the scattered sections of a submarine. Items found on the sea bed, such as a book and a key, can help you.

There are dangers. You have only three tanks of oxygen, and a molesting octopus might steal one, though his light-tentacled kleptomania can be curbed if you've got the right object. And subaqua activity increases the amount of dangerous nitrogen in your body . . .

But there's always Eric the eel, who can be controlled and squirms his slimy flanks into places too small for your bulk.

Third of the trio is *Great Gurianos*. Armed with a sword and shield and clad in a made-to-measure suit from Burton's Armoury Dept, the great Gurianos embarks upon his most dangerous mission.

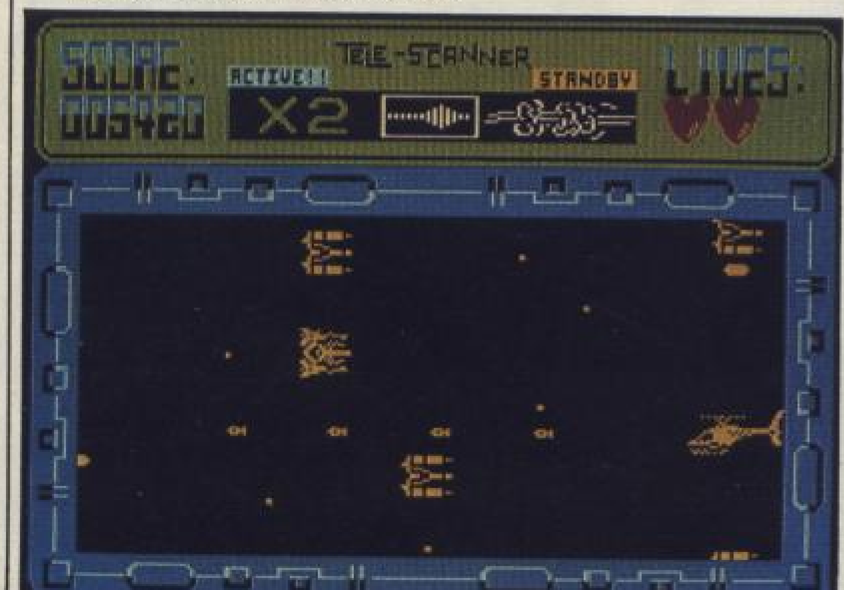


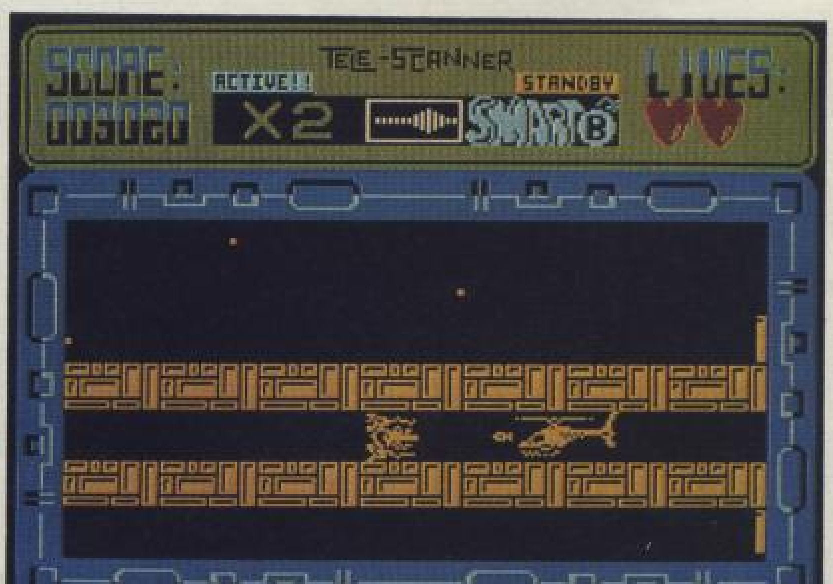
► **Attractive but a bit ineffectual, *Great Gurianos* is the least successful of *Trio*'s three games**

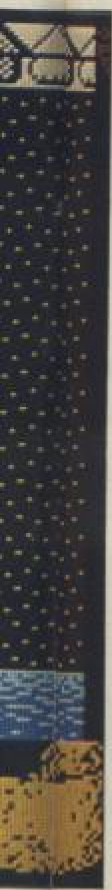
MIKE

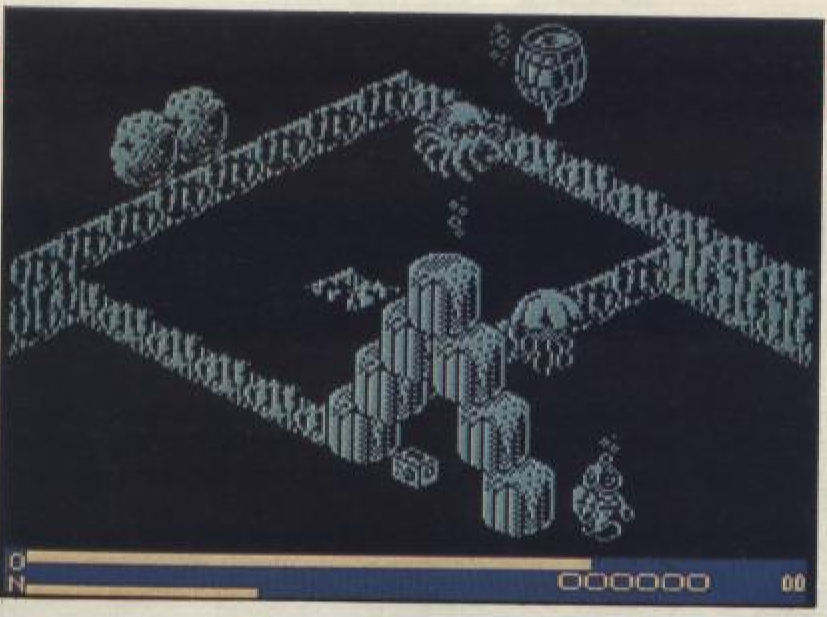
" Airwolf II was a disappointment; I enjoyed the first Airwolf, but I was bored with the sequel in ten minutes. Even on a compilation, that's not long enough. Great Gurianos (daft name) appeared to be a bit better, but after a few minutes its appeal waned, too. All rested on 3DC. And whaddya know, it's quite good! The end-of-game screen is absolutely brilliant: they've blurred the background and pushed the little processor to the outer limits of speed to produce one of the most effective colour displays I've seen. Though Trio isn't inspiring, three games at this price means excellent value for money. "

► **The scientists safely rescued, everyone's favourite chopper takes to the air again, this time in pursuit of troublesome aliens**









▶ Stranded on a wet, effluent-covered 3-D seabed is no fun unless you can put together the hidden submarine parts and escape



As he progresses through a medieval-style flick-screen world, Gurianos encounters hostile warriors out to spill his superior blood. He can temporarily activate a protector shield that guards against flying objects, but sadly this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

A series of swords also directs its scything attentions toward our hero, who must use his own sword to deflect the sharp points. And after dealing with four pieces of lethal cutlery, Gurianos develops a red supersword which gives him invincibility in combat. Swiping an airborne ball gives Gurianos extra armour for his adventure, too.

COMMENTS

Control keys: all games definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: *Airwolf II* uses one colour and black, *3DC* largely monochromatic but clever on last screen, *Great Gurianos* is pretty
Graphics: small and rather simple on *Airwolf II*, well designed isometric perspective on *3DC*, large and detailed on *Great Gurianos*
Sound: varies between games, but some neat tunes and more useful than colourful FX
Skill levels: one
General rating: each game in itself is above average, with *3DC* coming out top, but the whole package represents good value and hours of playing time

AIRWOLF II

Presentation	67%
Graphics	62%
Playability	64%
Addictive qualities	53%
Overall	61%

3DC

Presentation	75%
Graphics	76%
Playability	73%
Addictive qualities	70%
Overall	74%

GREAT GURIANOS

Presentation	62%
Graphics	66%
Playability	54%
Addictive qualities	47%
Overall	53%

COMPILATION OVERALL 70%

GALLETRON

Producer: **Bulldog**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Steve Elward**

Intent upon destroying the peace of the beautiful planet Galletron, the warlike Aarls have developed an advanced communications system. It could help them win – but it's also their weak link. It must be destroyed.

With your skimmer you can take out communication links on the surface of planets. But there are sentries on each planet – their contact is lethal and destroys one of the skimmer's three lives.

To defend itself and destroy sentries, the craft has two blasters: one destroys all metallic structures, the other disrupts enemy weaponry. But the blasters drain the skimmer's limited fuel supplies, which must be replenished from fuel cells on the planet's surface.

When all the communication stations on a planet have been destroyed, the skimmer is automatically teleported to the next world. After visiting the last planet, you reach Galletron itself and the central Power House. When this complex has been dealt with, your mission is complete.

CRITICISM

● "**Galletron is very easy to get into – because there's so little to do. The graphics are small and crude, and the animation is simplistic. Details are poor, too: the collision-detection varies from screen to screen, and the opening tune is awful.**"

ROBIN

● "*Galletron is described as 'challenging and addictive', but it bored me within half an hour. The graphics are awful, small and crudely-drawn, and there's a nasty glitch when your craft is destroyed. Control is fiddly and frustrating. Galletron is alright for a couple of games, but I doubt its lastability.*"

MARK

● "After ploughing through the inspired inlay, I wasn't expecting such rubbish as this, with its boring colours and unimaginative graphics. And the gameplay is much too easy to offer any real challenge."

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: small and plain
Sound: limited spot FX and a boring title tune
Skill levels: three
General rating: a dull game without much challenge

Presentation	33%
Graphics	30%
Playability	30%
Addictive qualities	24%
Overall	29%



▶ Your skimmer, in the left half of the screen, has just blown up a communications beam in its bid to reach the Central Power House

SLAP FIGHT

Producer: **Imagine**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Probe Software**

Passing over Orac in the Slapfighter, a multidirectional starcraft, you are attacked by aliens. Their weapons home in on the Slapfighter, so constant movement above the vertically scrolling surface of the planet is essential if you're not to become easy meat. (The spacecraft has four lives.)

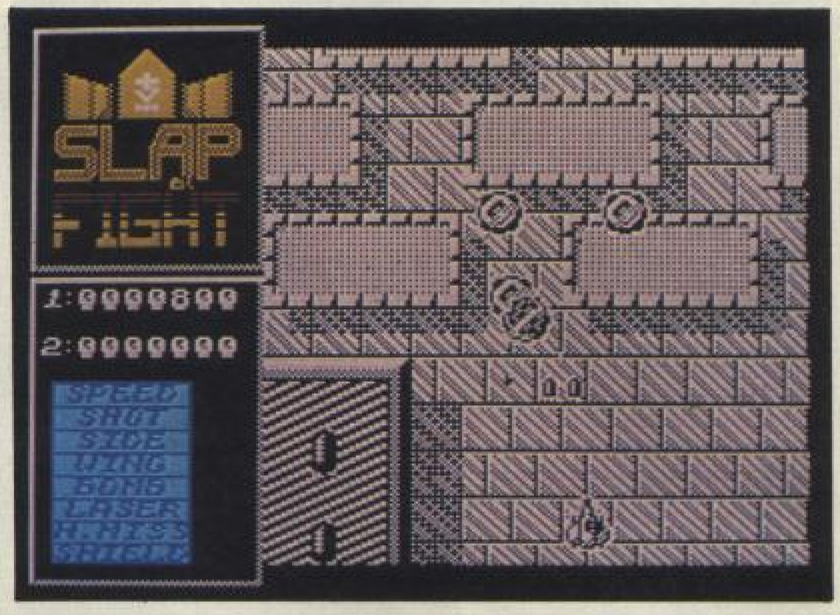
For protection the fighter carries a forward-aiming blaster, and more weapons can be added by flying over the stars revealed when certain aliens are destroyed.

Other advantages – extra speed, side fire, bombs, homing missiles, a temporarily protective shield, and a wing unit that improves fire power but increases the craft's size and vulnerability – can also be picked up.

Destroying the aliens and their works earns points, as astute readers might have predicted.

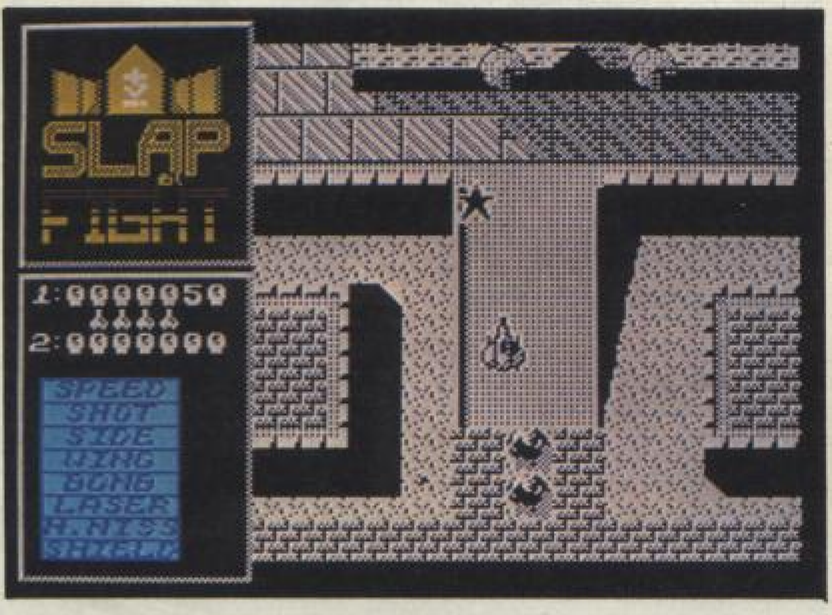
RICKY

" For all its colour and effects the coin-op Slap Fight **didn't excite me, but the Spectrum version seems better – though still nothing miraculous. Frustration can kill off enjoyment, because the bullets are difficult to detect (because of monochromatic graphics) and death may arrive at any moment. But if you can handle that,** Slap Fight **is addictive and should appeal to fans of the arcade game. And it has beautifully defined graphics with smooth scrolling, though the sound is weak – even on a 128K. "**



► **Look out – attack comes suddenly in Imagine's *Slap Fight*. That's your trusty Slapfighter at the bottom of the screen.**

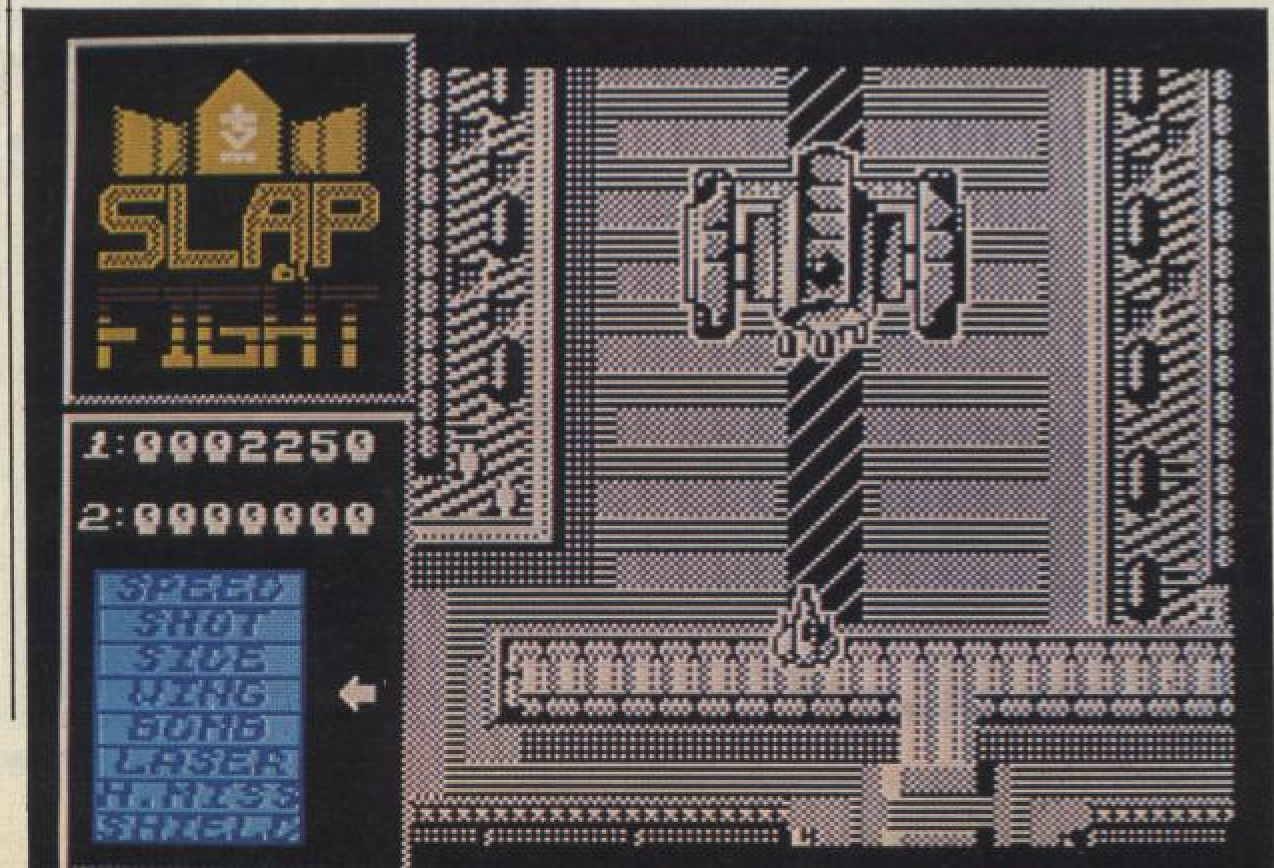
▼ **Picking up a star gives you . . . no, not a place in the gossip papers, but extra speed in *Slap Fight***



PAUL

" There's only one fault I could find with Slap Fight**: you can't see the pesky bullets. The shading on the intricately detailed landscape is superb, and with the super-smooth scrolling makes a very attractive game. The playability is improved by extremely accurate collision-detection and the chance to control your ship at your own speed. The weapons are fun and the aliens move beautifully in excellent formations –** Slap Fight **is certainly one of this month's most addictive blast-up games. "**

▼ **David meets Goliath in *Slap Fight***



MIKE

" Slap Fight **is an extremely dubious shoot-'em-up. It looks like Probe Software used the same code for the scroll and the score line as they did for** Xevious **– but like that US Gold game, this has poor graphics.** Slap Fight **becomes frustrating because the enemy missiles are so difficult to see – it's very easy to die with no idea how it happened! Incidentally, if you choose SPACE as the fire key you can't choose another select key, which means every time you fire the computer selects the current option. Annoying.** Slap Fight **is a disappointment, but fans of the Spectrum** Xevious **conversion might find it reasonable. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: sparse
Graphics: reasonable, but the attacking missiles are nearly invisible
Sound: uninteresting spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: continuously scrolling landscape
General rating: above-average, standard shoot-'em-up

Presentation	66%
Graphics	78%
Playability	74%
Addictive qualities	70%
Overall	72%



The year is 2032 AD and the world is balanced on a knife edge between survival and destruction. The last thirty years have seen an enormous expansion of the world's nuclear arsenal. There are now 16 nuclear superpower nations, each with the capacity to trigger the final destruction of mankind – Armageddon!

In a world where trust is crippled by 'Uncertainty of Response' the 16 superpowers form a desperate alliance – the UNN (United Nuclear Nations).

Together they finance and build an enormous network of spy and laser defence satellites capable of monitoring, influencing and even directly controlling the political, economic and military events of the world.

Control of the network itself resides in an enormous and sophisticated satellite, codenamed Olympus – and control of Olympus resides in its Supreme Commander often called 'The Armageddon Man' who literally holds the fate of the world in his hands.

In this incredible new game scenario *YOU* have just been chosen to become the next 'Armageddon Man'. Whether you have the necessary diplomatic, military and tactical skills to avoid global devastation is something you, and the World, are just about to find out.

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Reviews

FLASH GORDON

Producer: **M.A.D.**
Retail Price: **£2.99**

The tyrannical Ming is intent upon destroying Earth. To save humanity he must be killed, and Flash Gordon is the man for the job.

Deposited in a dangerous jungle world pierced by pathways, Flash has 24 hours to complete his mission. Along the winding tree-lined routes he runs, jumps, and ducks to avoid poisonous spiders, rock-throwing gorillas and spear-slinging skeletons. Should Flash fall foul of the fings in the foliage, he loses valuable time.

A map onscreen shows the jungle with identifiable features such as lakes, mountains, and a river. Arrows along the paths point toward the Caves Of Barin, where Flash can find invaluable help.

For protection Flash carries a gun, and can collect extra ammunition from scattered pathside chests. Some dangers need to be blasted several times before they're destroyed – but not all the advancing beasties in this flick-screen world need be shot. Some can be avoided with a bit of dexterous ducking and diving.

Once Flash has forced his way through the jungle's thickness, he meets Barin, owner of the cave, in combat, and uses a combination of his violent skills – fly kicks and punches to head and body. He has four minutes to win.

Should Barin succumb to Flash's violent charms, Flash becomes a biker with a powerful machine. Dismissing wardens and traffic cops, he vroooooooms off in search of Ming. But his progress is hindered by flying guards, who must be overcome using the bike's aimable blaster before Flash can reach maximum speed.

Exacerbation awaits: robot guards dropping explosive devices and, beyond them, a minefield. Both deplete Flash's energy levels, which can be restored if Flash passes through power gates (their direction is indicated at the top of the bike's control panel).

Beyond these perils is the jet-biking Ming. The missile system on Flash's bike can take out this personification of evil, once he's within range. But any inaccuracy or delay provides Ming with the opportunity to attack in a particularly efficient manner . . .





► With the business above and the map below, fast-action man Flash on the right faces a death-dealing denizen of the jungles

CRITICISM

● **" 'Flash, I love you, but you only have 24 hours to save the earth,' Flash Gordon's sweetheart once said. I doubt he'd bother trying if it meant having to play this difficult and ultimately boring game. The graphics are small, and though they're quite well-defined they appear somehow cluttered, especially on the opening jungle scene. Flash himself looks rather like a deep-sea diver – and, come to think of it, moves rather like one as well. You may get some enjoyment out of** Flash Gordon **if you like this type of game, but I doubt it. "**

MARK

● *" I'm surprised it's taken this long for a Flash Gordon game to appear – and I was expecting something a bit better than this. The graphics are poor, and Flash doesn't really live up to his superhero image. Sound is limited to the occasional spot effect and a repetitive title tune. And the gameplay itself is bland, with little action.* Flash Gordon *is quite easy to get into but proves unaddictive*

RUBICON

Producer: **Bug Byte**
Retail Price: **£2.99**

Rubicon's leaders have left their palatial underground environment – and their treasures. One day they will return, but in the meantime you can engage in a little plundering in the halls and passages of Rubicon.

These are patrolled by harmful floor-slitherers and airborne minifighters, and deadly darts which kill immediately. To conserve your three lives, you must jump and duck to avoid the approaching mechanical executioners. You can also acquire helpful objects.

Making your way through the corridors and antigrav entries of Rubicon's first level, you discover a control room with an overhead display of multicoloured symbols. Once you've mastered its mysteries, you can reach higher levels of Rubicon.

But don't forget there's a time limit on your scavenging . . .

CRITICISM

● **"** Rubicon **is very colourful, and the graphics are big and smooth-moving though not particularly interesting. But the gameplay is boring and repetitive – it's mostly running around a maze. It takes a while to get used to the controls, and there's no real incentive to learn. There's a distinct lack of things to do in** Rubicon **– I can't think of any redeeming features other than the colourful graphics. "**

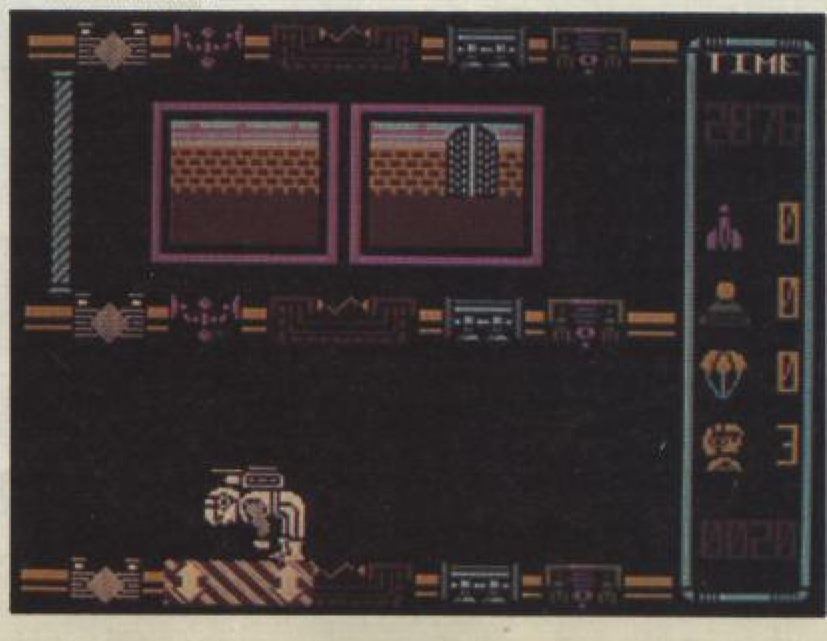
ROBIN

● *" My first reaction to* Rubicon *was negative – and it hasn't changed much. The graphics are okay, and the backgrounds are very colourful, though your man in the spacesuit moves like he's walking through treacle. Control is simple, but the game is often slow to react to threats from the missiles and other nasty surprises that Rubicon's rulers have left for you.* Rubicon *is a barely average search-and-collect-'em-up. "*

MARK



► Knees bend, touch your toes – physical jerks can be healthy exercise in the corridors of Rubicon



and uninspiring – it's a shame that such a popular hero is represented by a substandard game. "

ROBIN

● " The graphics in *Flash Gordon* are pretty awful, and the game isn't very interesting either. The first sequence looks just like Martech's *Tarzan* game, and *Flash Gordon* is just as boring as that – though it's a fraction of the price. Because of its low playability and addictivity, I wouldn't recommend this except to collectors of *Flash Gordon* memorabilia. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, SYMBOL SHIFT for fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface II
Use of colour: mainly monochrome with additional colour out of the playing area
Graphics: lots of them, but generally poor
Sound: avarage tune, meagre spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: three minigames, each with many screens **General rating:** a mediocre Commodore conversion which doesn't work to the full potential of the licence

Presentation	60%
Graphics	51%
Playability	45%
Addictive qualities	38%
Overall	42%

● " This must be one of the year's most tedious products. There's absolutely no fun in *Rubicon*, and its appearance is very unappealing. The graphics do nothing to enhance the awkward control, and the instructions give no useful information. *Rubicon* – the game to put you to sleep in less than a minute. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, L up, SYMBOL SHIFT down
Joysticks: Kempston, Cursor, Sinclair
Use of colour: vividly colourful
Graphics: big, but unrealistic animation
Sound: spot FX
Skill levels: one
General rating: awkward control and monotonous gameplay

Presentation	40%
Graphics	47%
Playability	32%
Addictive qualities	24%
Overall	30%

VOIDRUNNER

Producer: **M.A.D.**
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **Jeff Minter**

The Droid Wars are over, but the vengeful losers are intent upon attacking the Homeworld with a retaliatory holocaust. They must be stopped.

You have control of a multidirectional green command craft supported by three drone fighters. At first these adopt a clustered grouping around the command ship, but on higher levels they go into symmetrical formations and move in different patterns.

Each craft has a blaster that can fire independently (and in later space regions they can fire in different directions).

MARK

" *Voidrunner* **is in the classic blast-'em-up mould. Like most of the Jeff Minter games I've seen, it's fast, colourful, and above all weird. Controlling the ships is easy, but keeping out of the way of the aliens is hard. I wasn't very impressed with the graphics – after playing the 16K Commodore version I felt more could have been done for the Spectrum. But the game isn't bad, and if you want an addictive blast you could do worse than buy this.** "

ROBIN

" It's hard to describe Voidrunner**'s graphics as anything but poor – small, ill-defined clusters of pixels that don't seem to represent anything. And once I got over that shock I found** Voidrunner **a very poor** Centipede **variant. The inlay suggests this is a highly innovative shoot-'em-up, but the reality is disappointing. Controlling the four ships is quite easy and the keys are very responsive, so the game is simple to get into and playable for a while, but it's hardly addictive.** Centipede **games can be fun if you want to wallow in an afternoon's nostalgia, but there are better ones, and I expected a bit more of a game with the brains of Jeff Minter behind it. "**

Some aliens move predictably and others randomly; some drop bombs and others fire lasers. Some have to be blasted several times before they're destroyed, and then can spawn other aliens. There are 30 waves of attackers, and all aliens within a wave must be destroyed before the next can be tackled.

A periodically pulsing 'zapper' line scans the screen from top to bottom. If the command ship is on the line when it pulses, you and your drone craft are destroyed.

MIKE

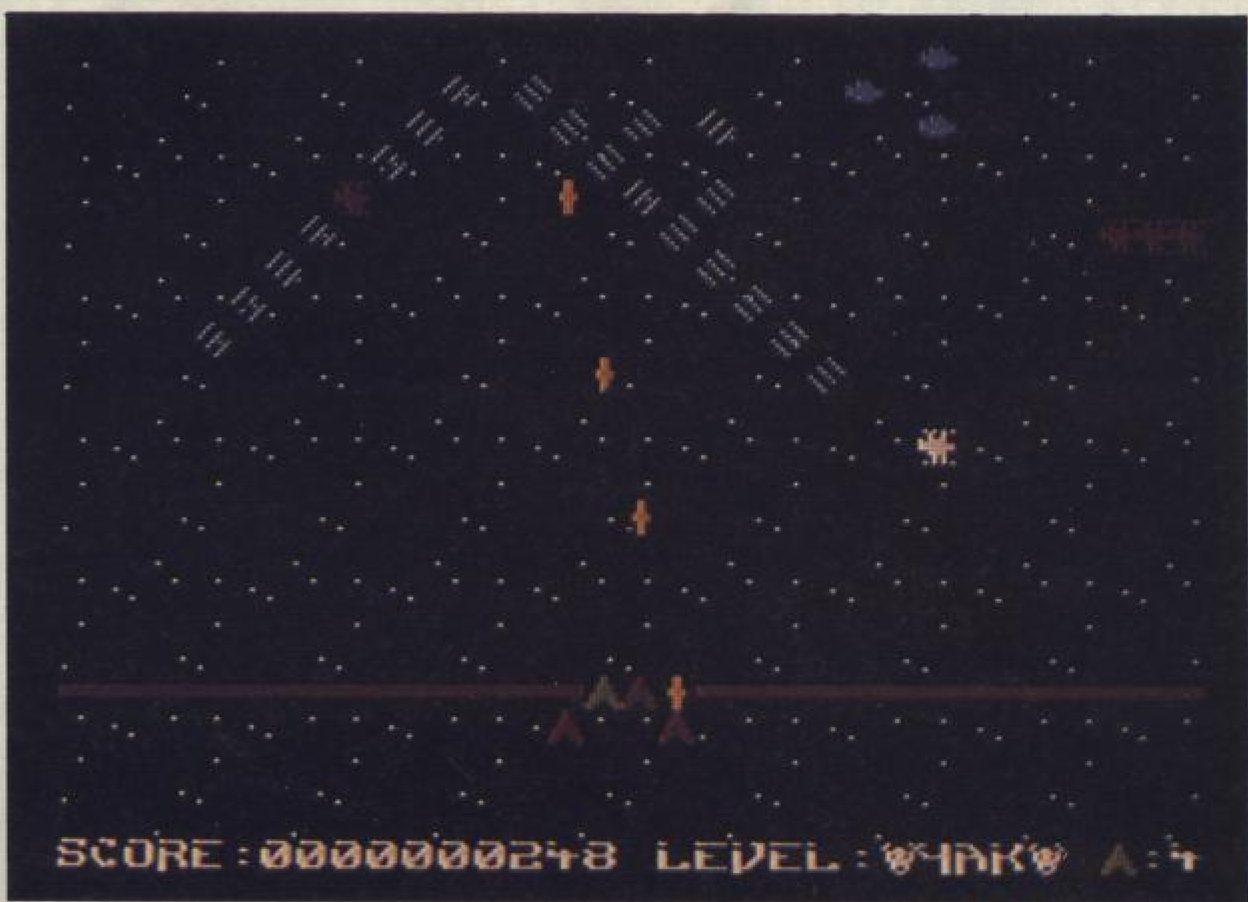
" At first sight Voidrunner **looks very drab. But playing it converted me! The speed is just right: verging on the impossible, but fast enough to encourage you to keep going. My only gripe with the gameplay is my index finger, which took quite a battering after the first level. I was a bit disappointed by the second stage, which is basically a reversal of the first; but it's no cop-out, as the reversal calls for entirely different playing techniques. This is the first of the cult Minter games I've played, and I'm waiting for more . . . "**

COMMENTS

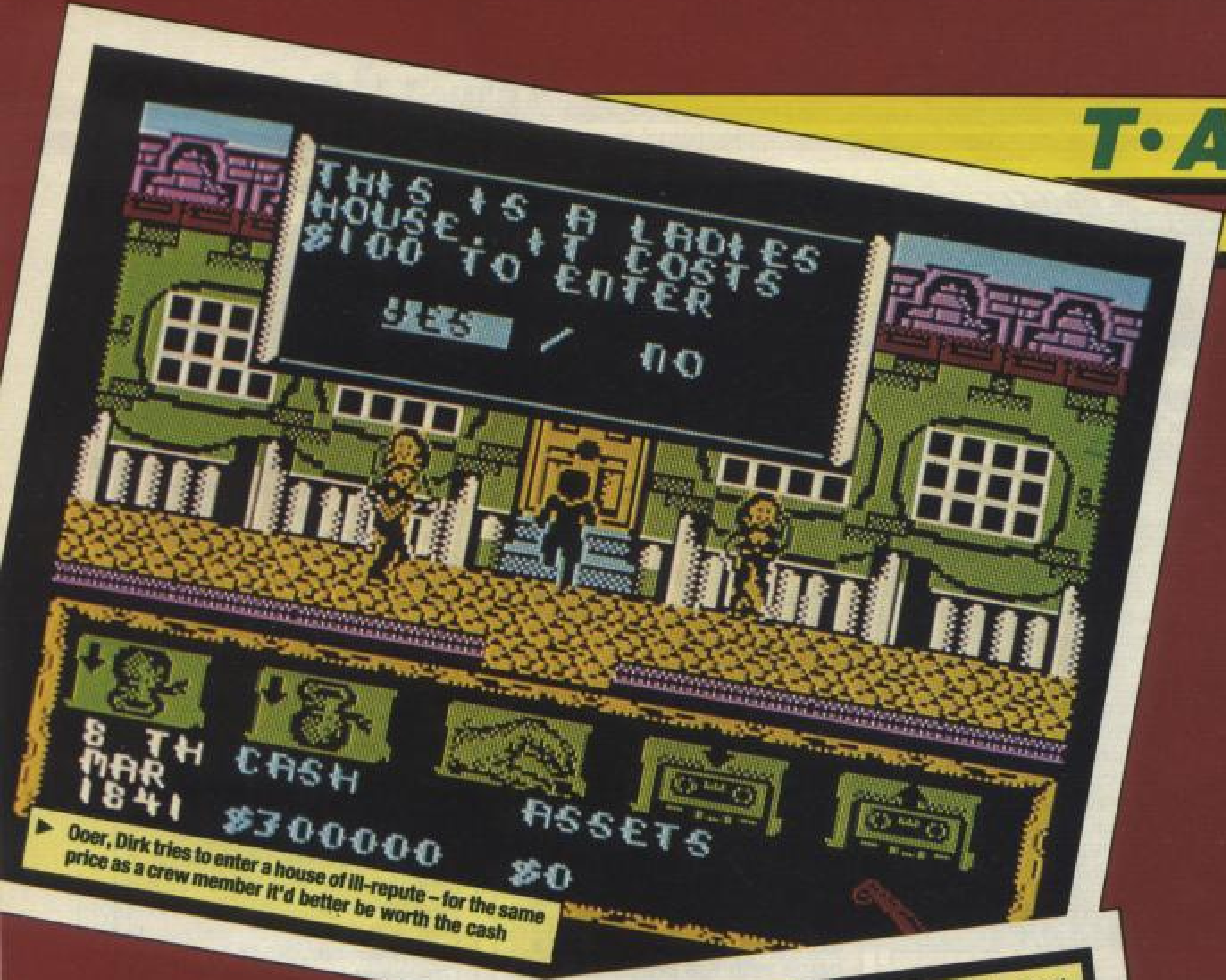
Control keys: Q/A up/down O/P left/right, SPACE for fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface II
Use of colour: lots of it
Graphics: simple and plain
Sound: little
Skill levels: one
Screens: plenty to hold your interest
General rating: mixed opinions but generally considered above average – Minter freaks may find it more appealing

Presentation	66%
Graphics	38%
Playability	59%
Addictive qualities	58%
Overall	54%

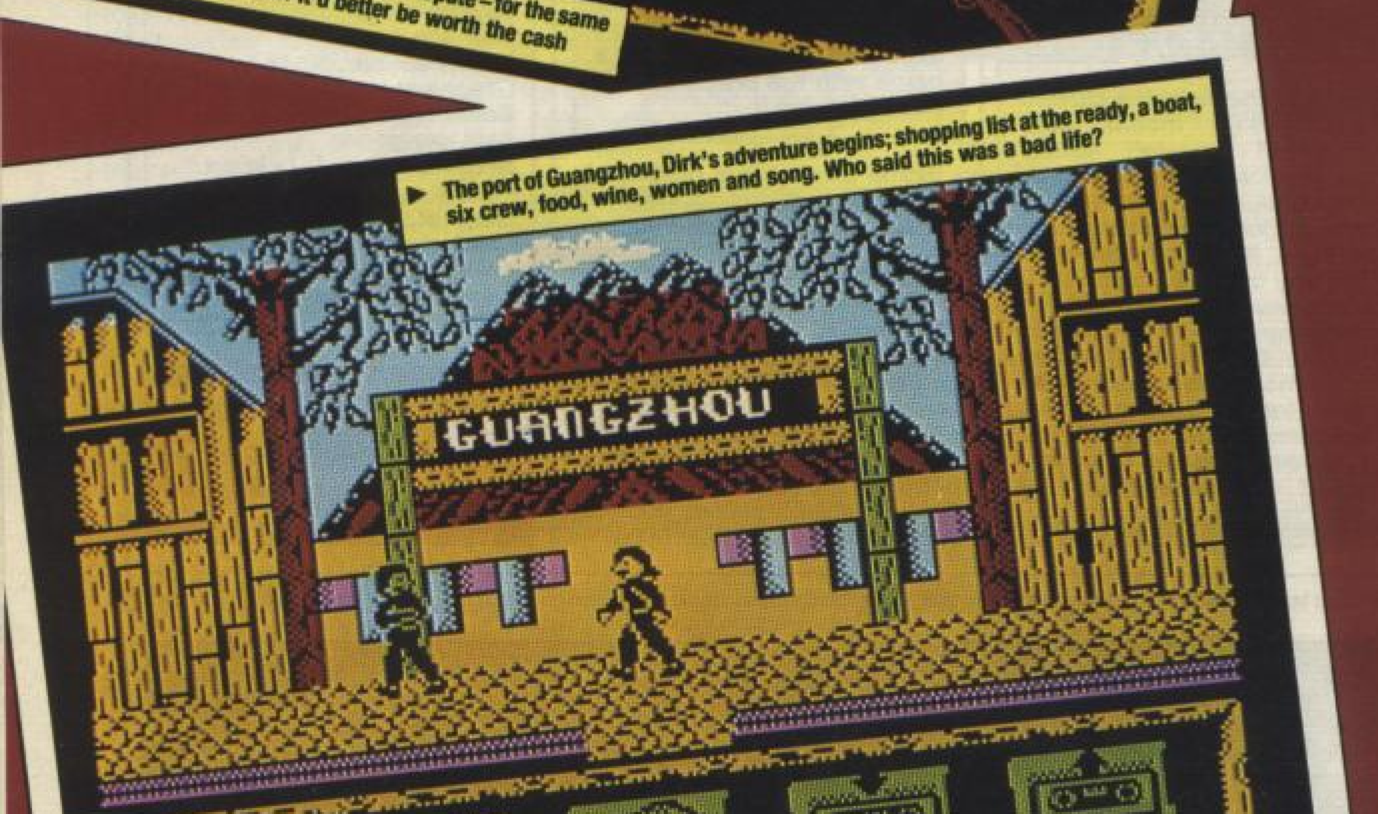
► **The look of yesteryear – fast pixels from Jeff Minter make for a classic shoot-'em-up**



T·A·I - P·A·N



► Ooer, Dirk tries to enter a house of ill-repute – for the same price as a crew member it'd better be worth the cash



► The port of Guangzhou, Dirk's adventure begins; shopping list at the ready, a boat, six crew, food, wine, women and song. Who said this was a bad life?



► Dodgy dealings and opium smuggling on the streets of Guangzou in Ocean's adaptation of James Clavell's *Tai-Pan*.

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Memory: **128K version**
Authors: **Sentient Software**

In the YearOf Our Lord 1841, the eastern seaways are teeming with traders.And in this game based on James Clavell's best-selling novel you are Dirk Struan, a merchant intent upon amassing a fortune as quickly as possible in the streets and seas of the Orient.

As in any trading game, a financial stake is required; in *Tai-Pan* it's to be found in the local town of Canton – a loan of $300,000, repayable in six months on pain of death. The sum is sufficient for some of your needs, but not all. For instance, you need a ship, and the three up for sale are a lorcha (a lightly armed, fast smuggling ship) at $150,000, a standard trading clipper with more cannon and crew for $250,000, and a heavily armed frigate which at $400,000 is out of your range – at first.

The stews of the East offer delights, dangers, deals and manpower. Once purchased a vessel must be crewed, either with mercenary sea dogs or with infinitely cheaper press-ganged labour. The jobcentres for the latter are inns, where only the most exhausted and drunken seafront dregs are incapable of resisting their unceremonious enlistment.

CRITICISM

" This is one of the best trader games around, and very good by any standards. The graphics are colourful, and the sound on the 128 version is very impressive. With such a variety of things to do (trading, killing pirates etc) and a huge playing area it can keep the player enthralled for hours. Tai-Pan **is one of the most enjoyable games to come out this year – buy it and you won't regret it! "**
ROBIN

With a full complement of crew (some ships need more sailors than others), the vessel can be loaded with such valuable objects as maps, compass, telescope and sextant, foodstuffs and trading goods bought from warehouses and suppliers.

During these consumer expeditions, you may find gambling dens where you can bet on a race between mythical beasts, substantially plumping your wallet or giving it anorexia. Other urban delights include a brothel and inn that can delight – and leave you tired, drunk and susceptible to press-ganging.

In town, smugglers may accost you and try to sell you highly dangerous contraband, which is very profitable when traded between ports – but carries the risk of gaol.

With purchased items stored in your ship's limited cargo space, you choose a shipping route and set sail for distant ports. Weather conditions, wind direction and pirate ships can jeopardise any voyage, but a careful choice of route can diminish such problems.

CRITICISM

" The long wait has been worth it. It's obvious from the first game of Tai-Pan **that months of work have gone into making this one of the best trading games around. It's not just because of the attractive and cleverly-designed graphics, but also because it's so tremendously addictive and playable. The only bad point is the complexity of this Oriental wonder! The screens at all the ports are exactly the same, though laid out differently – even so it takes ages for boredom to set in. It's all highly original and the realism is unbelievable; you'll have to play it to find out. "**

PAUL

As you put to sea, the street scenes are replaced by a bird's-eye view of ocean and land. Beneath this geographic scene are seven icons which raise and lower the ship's sails, assess the wind direction, provide a telescope, offer a combat mode, unfurl a map of the China Seas and feed the crew – important, because otherwise they might mutiny from hunger or succumb to scurvy, the sailor's disease caused by lack of vitamin C.

With a powerful frigate, you can turn privateer and plunder other craft. If hit by cannonballs a ship is disabled and can be boarded by sailing alongside and killing its Captain.

But fierce resistance can be expected, and you might have to retreat to your vessel. If too many of your crew are killed in battle, your own ship becomes unsailable. (Likewise, don't kill too many enemy sailors – you'll need them to sail the captured ship.) And fighting reduces your men's stamina, already eaten away by hunger.

Careful cannon fire ensures that the captured vessel and its cargo remain intact and seaworthy and will fetch a high price in port. But other privateers may attempt to take your captured ships and end your quest for fortune.

As you build up your fleet, a great trading empire can be founded, generating enough wealth to repay your debt and leave you a colonial master of the Orient.

CRITICISM

" Whereas most licensed novels require some knowledge of the story line, Tai-Pan **is an excellent game in itself – and the Oriental scene adds dramatically to the atmosphere. The objective may seem difficult, but the icons and simple question/answer options are a great help and I was soon engrossed.** Tai-Pan **isn't easy – it requires dedicated mapping and note-keeping. But there's a lot to keep the player occupied: a gambling game, a fast-reaction shoot-'em-up (boarding) and a pseudo**Gauntlet **game. Add to those the astounding street-scene graphics and Oriental electro-bop tune, and you've got one of the most enthralling arcade adventures of the year. "**

RICKY

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, Z down, I left, P right, N fire, SPACE toggle icon
Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: range from simple to detailed and decorative
Sound: a good tune but potentially annoying
Skill levels: one
General rating: an enthralling trade-'em-up adventure with depth and atmosphere

Presentation	89%
Graphics	93%
Playability	90%
Addictive qualities	94%
Overall	93%

PNEUMATIC HAMMERS

Producer: **Firebird Silver**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Andromeda Software**

In the world of international troubleshooting, improvisation is the key. The American oil-rig disaster expert Red Adair once stopped a major blowout with his secretary's hairpin! They don't make them like that anymore.

But in *Pneumatic Hammers* YOU are the troubleshooter . . .

At the bottom of the Lee Valley a gold-research base is threatened by constant landslides caused by its overactive pile-drivers. The handle that operates these hammers has sheered off, rendering the machine uncontrollable.

Having evacuated the base the operators get in touch with you, Red O'Blair, troubleshooter supreme. Your job is to shut down the plant by replacing the missing lever, before the pile-drivers bury the base and cause catastrophic damage to the nearby towns.

The research base consists of five rooms connected by a lift. The building is in the middle of a river running through a canyon; piles are driven into the riverbed on either side, and rubble from the landslides slopes upward from the river's edge.

The only way to get another handle for the wild hammers is to cast one from the most abundant metal in the area, gold, unearthed by the landslides.

To get to the mineral-rich rubble you hop across the river, using the piles as stepping stones.

When enough gold has been collected you can leg it back to base and test the gold for purity. Then it's off to the furnace to melt it down and cast a new handle.

The game ends if the rubble level outside gets too high, crushing the base – and you with it.

CRITICISM

● " Pneumatic Hammers *is one heavy-going game. What little there is to do is repetitive and boring, and the graphics do little to enhance the game – none of them are very convincing and all are crudely drawn.* "

PAUL

● **" What a weird little game!** Pneumatic Hammers **is the most uninteresting, unplayable game I've seen lately. The graphics would have been passable three years ago, but by today's standards they're pathetic. "**

NICK

" *Pneumatic Hammers* is well original – but it's a failure. The gameplay is very limited, with only one major task, and gets monotonous and infuriating. The graphics are bad, the screen display looks amateurish, and there are some nasty attribute problems and badly-animated characters. "

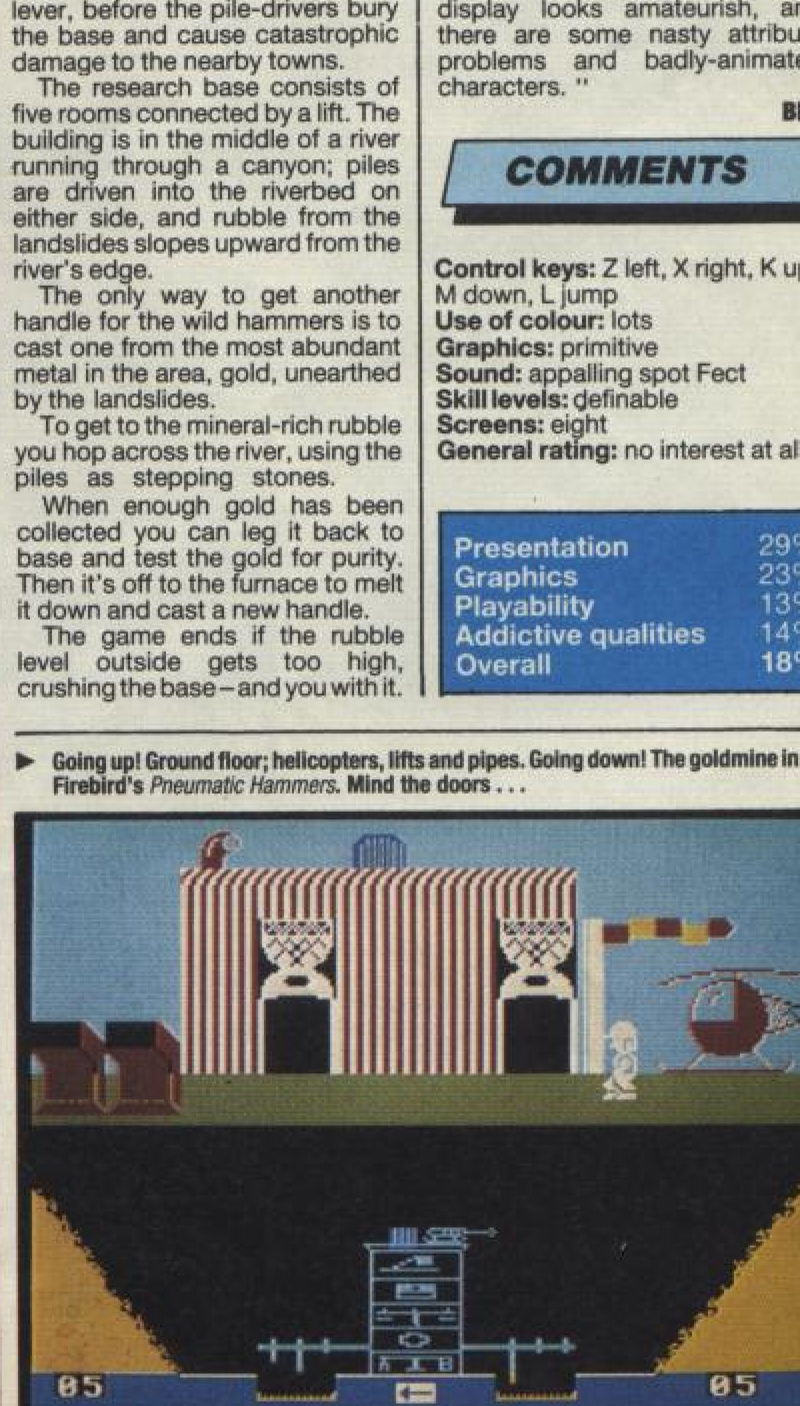
BEN

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, K up, M down, L jump
Use of colour: lots
Graphics: primitive
Sound: appalling spot Fect
Skill levels: definable
Screens: eight
General rating: no interest at all

Presentation	29%
Graphics	23%
Playability	13%
Addictive qualities	14%
Overall	18%

▶ **Going up! Ground floor; helicopters, lifts and pipes. Going down! The goldmine in Firebird's** *Pneumatic Hammers*. **Mind the doors . . .**





JAPAN has a word for the



CLU CLU LAND The evil Sea Urchin has hidden the gold in an underground mystery maze.

BASEBALL It's the most realistic baseball game outside of a ballpark!

HOGAN'S ALLEY Use your Zapper light gun to shoot the gangsters.

DUCK HUNT There's a duck in the air! You've only got three shots to bag this duck. And if you miss, even your dog laughs at you in this fast-action Zapper Gun game.

GYROMITE You've got to keep R.O.B.'s gyroscope spinning to help a mad scientist de-activate the dynamite in his laboratory in order to play this action-packed game!

GOLF Choose your clubs. Control your swings. Select the angle of every shot. It's Nintendo GOLF and there's not a video golf game on par with it anywhere!

For the first time in the UK direct from Japan comes Nintendo, the home entertainment system with genuine arcade-quality graphics. Nintendo make 2 out of 3 of all the world's coin-op arcade machines, so they know what they're doing. And already, in Japan 9½ million homes have a Nintendo home entertainment system.

Now you can enjoy the amazing 52 colour 3-D graphics of Nintendo. (On most home computers, you've been lucky to get 16 colours until now!) Nintendo's superb graphics give the games a convincing true 3-D feel with actual shadows which add depth to the characters.

Already there are 27 Nintendo Game Paks available in the UK and more are being added to the software library all the time. But there's even more to Nintendo than the best games you've ever seen...

Nintendo Entertainment System

For the first time home entertainment enters a new dimension. Because when you own a Nintendo entertainment system you also get a buddy to play with, a Robotic Operating Buddy to be exact (or R.O.B. to his friends). He's your partner. Seat him next to you, send him signals from your tv screen and together you can tackle the enemy.

The Zapper Gun

Never before has there been a video gun of this calibre. The astonishing light sensitive Zapper Gun lets you shoot moving targets with pinpoint accuracy from up to 16 feet! If you think you're a sharp shooter the Zapper Gun will test your skill to the full.

Nintendo or Super Nintendo, the choice is yours.

Which set do you want? NINTENDO's superb high-quality action costs £99.00* for control deck, mains transformer, two hand controls, and one free Super Mario Bros Game Pak. DELUX NINTENDO costs £159.99* for the amazing Zapper Gun, R.O.B., and two free games, Gyromite and Duck Hunt.

Reviews

TABLE FOOTBALL

Producer: **Budgie**
Retail Price: **£1.99**

This sports simulation takes you into the compact world of table football, a game where a football pitch has been squeezed onto a table and then peopled by midget Glen Hoddles and dwarflike Brian Robsons.

The pitch has goals to the left and right. Lined up against each other on a grass-green pitch are two teams of six players. Each team stands in three rows, with three players in midfield and two in attack, and the ultimate line of defence, a goalkeeper.

Players can't be moved individually – they go together as a row. But any player can kick the ball forward or back, or pass to the side. The ball is not blocked by a player unless he attempts to kick it – usually it passes straight through his legs.

Once kicked, the football can bounce off the side and end walls of the table. A ball cannot go out of play, except when a goal is scored. When this happens a message is displayed, and another of the game's nine footballs appears on the centre spot. A score is kept for both teams in this two-player game.

CRITICISM

● "**Why anyone would be interested in this I don't know – it's poorly represented with bad graphics, and offers hardly any compulsion and pleasure.** Table Football **is very poor value for money.**"

MIKE

● "*Table football was never one of the most inspiring activities. Now the sticks have been replaced with keys and the table with a VDU – and whatever fun there was has been left in the pubs and arcades where the concept comes from.* Table Football *is spoiled by terrible collision-detection, and it's impossible to judge angles properly; hitting the ball can send it absolutely anywhere. It's one of the worst sport (?) simulations I've seen in a long long time.*"

PAUL

● "The graphics don't stop flickering and the colour clash is terrible! On the sound front, there's just a blip now and again when the massive ball hits the side of the table. This ball must be magic because it never stops! After hitting a wall it moves in the opposite direction till it hits another. And the collision-detection is bad – you can score by just hitting the post. *Table Football* isn't even worth this cheap price."



▶ **A dramatic save in** *Table Football*



COMMENTS

Control keys: Player One: CAPS SHIFT left, Z right, 1 up, Q down; Player Two: M left, SYMBOL SHIFT right, O up, 0 (zero) down
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: too simple
Sound: spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: an original idea – but a very poor and boring simulation, requiring two players

Presentation	32%
Graphics	30%
Playability	20%
Addictive qualities	25%
Overall	28%

ULTIMA RATIO

Producer: **Firebird Silver**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Authors: **Adam Waring, Tony Warriner**

Ultima Ratio hangs threateningly above the earth, an ominously powerful nine-stage battle platform controlled by an alien race. But its inexorable progress earthward can be stopped by your highly manoeuvrable fighter.

This craft can find its way through the intricacies of the platform's superstructure, which contains killer units and direction-reversing devices, multiple pulse guns and shielding.

Your multidirectional ship carries blasters (and limited ammunition) to counter an alien defence squad of fighters, which flit unpredictably across the squared surface of the platform.

All enemy craft and many of the platform's carbuncular constructions must be destroyed before you can reach the next section of the battle platform.

And your fighter's shielding is weakened and eventually destroyed by alien fire and dangerous ricochets from your own blasting. In this unprotected state the fighter's five lives can be quickly lost. But shielding can be renewed and fuel replenished in rejuvenating zones.

Time screens show the seconds left for each stage as you fight through this vertical flick-screen space world.

▶ **Blam, blam, blam. Shoot-'em-up action as your space craft wizzes over the colourful spacescape in** *Ultima Ratio*



CRITICISM

●"Ultima Ratio **is another shoot-everything game with a colourful backdrop. The graphics are well-defined and colour is used very effectively – every block in the background has its own colour, and there's no clash. And the small monitor screens around the play area, showing how much time you've got left, give that extra boost of panic! This is a real neat shoot-'em-up; I just wonder how on Earth you kill the last alien on zone 01!**"

NICK

●"*How can anyone expect a success from something as unplayable and unrewarding as this? The graphics are poor; the colour is used far too liberally and the characters are unattractive, dull, and unoriginal. Some may buy it purely on impulse at £1.99 – it's them I pity.* Ultima Ratio *is awful.*"

MIKE

●"The similarity to *Lightforce* stops at the colour-masking technique – everything else in *Ultima Ratio* is inferior. There's a serious lack of decent sound, which would bring the game to life, and it gets boring very quickly – mainly because of the appalling control method. After a long line of very impressive budget games, the Buzby boys have come up with a below-average product."

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: choice of three sets
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: reasonable
Graphics: unattractive;
Sound: poor spot FX
Skill levels: one
General rating: an uninteresting shoot-'em-up

Presentation	34%
Graphics	39%
Playability	26%
Addictive qualities	35%
Overall	34%

Reviews

MOUNTIE MICK'S DEATHRIDE

Producer: **Reaktör**
Retail Price: **£4.99**

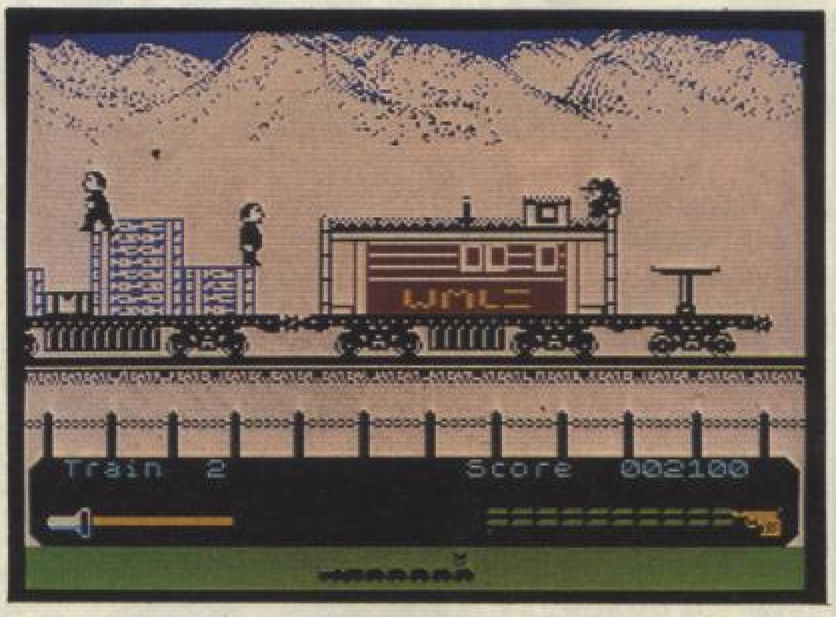
Mounted Michael is stuck on the same train as a band of desperate gun-toting train robbers, who plan to make off with the railway's gold shipments. To thwart their villainous plans, he must progress along the top of the train.

Mick can jump between carriages – and fall between them, which is fatal. He must also avoid the robbers' gunfire, or lose one of his three lives. And the train robbers have grenades, too.

But a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do, so Mick packs his trusty pistol. He can bop off the baddies by leaping upon them, or giving them a taste of their own grenades.

The train includes flat cars carrying unstable loads, and leaking gas tanks which can snuff out Mick if he's not quick enough to find a gas mask. Tunnels provide additional hazards for this intrepid Canadian, but with his torch and limited battery power he can battle through their dangerous darkness.

There are nine trains for Mick to traverse, *each* carrying a team of robbers. (These were lawless days, after all.) When Mick reaches the front of a train, he must board the small handcart on the rails, pump its handle and travel to the next train.



► The fearless frontiersman still has seven trains to go in *Mountie Mick's Deathride*

CRITICISM

● " *Stop The Express* without the fun? Surely no-one would have the guts to reproduce Sinclair's three-year-old classic (CRASH Issue Six, July 1984) as this load of rubbish? *Mountie Mick's Deathride* is boring (and it's a pathetic name). The graphics are badly drawn, and there's no colour to speak of. Playability is the pits. Steer your train well clear. "

MIKE

● **" 'Yeeha, ride 'im cowboy', or something along those tracks. There've been a lot of games with old American locomotives in them lately – perhaps a new trend in software? And I couldn't help noticing the similarities this has to** Stop The Express**. It seems all you have to do here is shoot the baddies before they shoot you – but it's still an amazingly addictive game with good graphics. "**

NICK

● *" The game is in total contrast to the title – it's simple and easily mastered, and has little lasting*

CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL

Producer: **Activision/Gamestar**
Retail Price: **£9.99**
Authors: **Darrin Massena, Scott Orr, Mark Madland**

Take rounders, popcorn, hype and a few rule-changes, put them all in a Magimix blender and you've got the game of baseball.

This sports simulation follows in the bootsteps of the all-American game, with hitting and pitching sides competing for top honours.

The action takes place on a split screen showing an aerial view of the baseball pitch and a close-up of the pitcher throwing the ball to the waiting batsman.

Players take it in turns to come to the hitting position, or 'plate', to swing the bat at three successive balls delivered by the opposition pitcher. If a batsman misses the ball it's a strike, and the next ball is pitched. Three strikes and the batsman is out.

The batsman has to hit the ball forward to fall within the area described by two foul lines, to avoid a foul hit.

If he's made a clean and foulless hit, the batsman automatically runs toward the first of four bases that make up the baseball diamond. If the ball is well struck, the batsman continues running from base to base, returning to his start point to score a home run.

Usually the strike isn't so perfect and is lofted or quickly fielded. And if it's caught by a fielder, the batsman is out.

After the batsman has reached first base you can control him – he can either stop running or continue to the next base.

If the batsman decides to stop at a base, a replacement steps up to the plate. After hitting the ball, he too runs. The first batsman then becomes the controllable lead runner, with the other batsman automatically following him round the diamond.

When a batsman reaches fourth base, he's scored a run (which is displayed on the scoreboard).

But if he runs on from a base and can't reach the next base before the ball is thrown there, he's out. When three of the batting team are out, they become the pitching and fielding side.

Then you have control of the pitcher, who can send down a series of balls: swing ball, knuckle ball, fastball, curveball or screwball, each with different movements in the air. A pitcher's success with the ball is dependent upon his ability and his stamina, which diminishes with the number of pitches he throws.

When each side has batted, one of the nine innings is completed.

CRITICISM

● **" After Gamestar's sporty successes on the Commodore, I was expecting astounding graphics and amazing gameplay . . . but I'm still waiting. They haven't produced the goods on the Spectrum – here the computer opponent is a right dull bloke. Nearly every time he insists on hitting the ball behind the 'foul' line, no matter how easy the throw you give him. And though a large range of throws is available, they all appear the same onscreen. The animation of the main characters is very realistic, but the rest of the screen is very badly presented, with crude graphics and badly-placed colour. "**

PAUL

● *" The graphics vary from not bad (as you view the batsman about to hit the ball, for instance) to absolute rubbish (the bird's-eye view of the pitch, with deformed hunchbacks hobbling round a colour-clashing, glitchy field). Even if you're keen on baseball, I doubt*

► Slugger Cameron takes the mark for the next pitch in this split-screen baseball simulation



appeal. Still, the background graphics are very realistic and give a good feeling of depth. But this is spoiled by tacky and uninspired train and character graphics. And gameplay is impaired by atrocious collision-detection, which destroys the atmosphere. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: patchy
Graphics: ugly but clear
Sound: spot FX and an unmemorable title tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: nine trains in one continuous scroll
General rating: Mike and Paul could see nothing good here, but Nick enjoyed the game within its limits, which brought the averages up quite a bit

Presentation	45%
Graphics	46%
Playability	43%
Addictive qualities	48%
Overall	**47%**

you'd find this very playable. "

MARK

● " Some of the graphics are very impressive, I'll say that for *Championship Baseball*; it's a pity the game is so naff. While pitching and striking are all shown in full glorious colour clash, the fielding screen is risible: the players are small and appallingly coloured, and they seem to obey no-one but themselves! I think I'll stick to playing tennis; it's better value for money and a lot more fun. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: W or U/X or M forwards/backwards, A or H/D or K left/right, S or J to fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Use of colour: reasonable definition, but loads of colour clash
Graphics: large player graphics detailed, field graphics very poor
Sound: apart from a beep for ball strikes, nothing
Skill levels: one, with two-player and player-versus-computer options
Screens: one
General rating: lack of polish and realism ruin what could have been a playable and addictive simulation

Presentation	53%
Graphics	44%
Playability	33%
Addictive qualities	28%
Overall	33%

PROHIBITION

Producer: **Infogrames**
Retail Price: **£9.95**

Swamped by gangland crime, the New York Police Department hires a mercenary to rub out the city's contract killers. But they won't be no pushover.

Killers appear on the streets, at windows and on the apartment-block roofs of a decaying downtown zone. An arrow at the bottom of the screen shows which way the mercenary you control must move to find your next target, but doesn't give the killer's vertical position.

Once the hoodlum has been found, you can get him in your sights. A killer must be hit within three seconds after an onscreen countdown begins. And when killers lurk in difficult positions extra time is given to blast them.

But if the baddie isn't shot before the deadline, you get it instead and lose one of your three lives. At higher levels the hoodlums become faster in their reactions.

And killers never come quietly – they return fire if given half a chance. Enemy bullets can be dodged, giving you an extra three seconds of grace – but such evasive action can't be kept up forever. A bar indicator shows remaining dodge time.

Still, you're paid good greenbacks for each contract successfully completed.

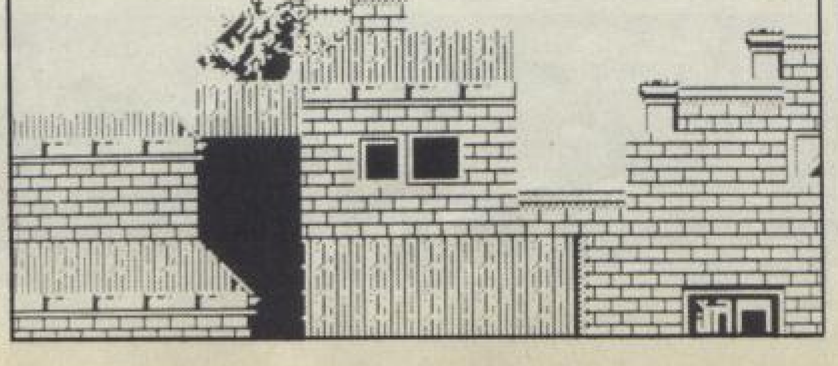
Some despicable killers hold hostages, so great accuracy is essential if you're not to plug an innocent victim.

Now get out on those mean streets . . .

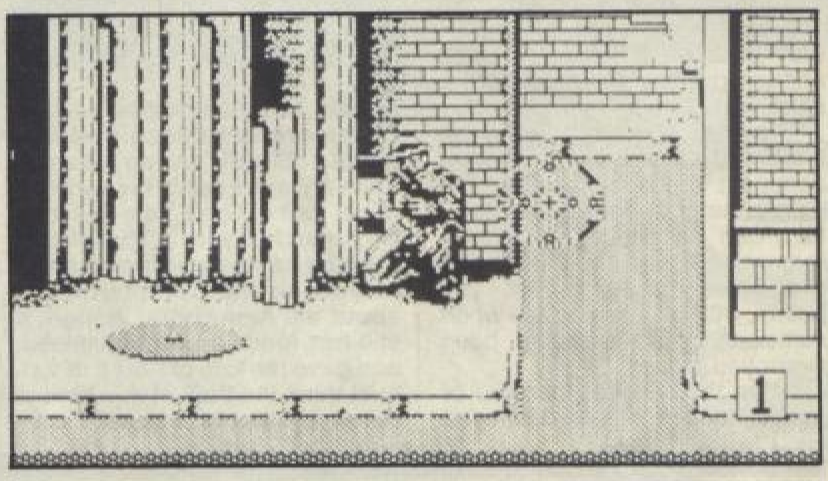
BEN

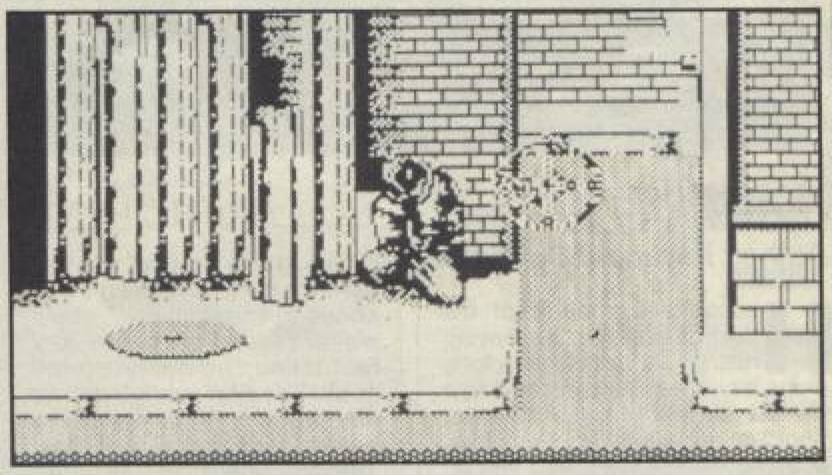
" Infuriating and slow it may be, but Prohibition **isn't bad; I was absorbed by my first play. But when things begin to get a little hot under the collar, the gameplay falls apart – your cross hairs jump when a shot is fired, so accurate shooting (not easy to begin with) becomes impossible. Graphically it could have been much better: the background is nicely drawn but it's spoiled by the horrible scrolling and badly-defined mobsters. And the sound is another major letdown.** Prohibition **is disappointing – implemented properly it could have been brilliant. "**

► **You've got the concrete jungle in your sights in** *Prohibition*



► **Ruthless gangsters lurk in the alleys of New York**





► **Now the hunters are the hunted . . .**

NICK

" The police failed so it's all down to you. Good luck – you'll need it! Prohibition **has some of the best graphics I've seen on the Spectrum for a long, long time, but the lack of colour and sound are a pity. Infogrames have a real winner here – if only there were a little tune at the start . . . "**

ROBIN

" Other than the gangster theme, there's no tie-in between this game and real Prohibition (the US ban on alcohol in the Twenties), which is slightly misleading. The title suggests images of fast shoot-outs and smuggling operations but the real thing is tedious. It consists only of shooting and dodging – and though it's very easy to get into, there's no challenge or depth to Prohibition. **And the monochromatic graphics aren't as highly detailed as in other games that use this technique. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, S down, O left, P right, SPACE to fire, ENTER to dodge, number keys to pause
Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: excellent, despite slightly jerky scrolling
Sound: limited to gunshots
Skill levels: progressive
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: a straightforward shoot-'em-up with an original scenario which *could* have led to a great game

Presentation	58%
Graphics	71%
Playability	58%
Addictive qualities	54%
Overall	59%



► With the remnants of a recently blasted alien flying about him, *Killer Ring* struggles on (and still only on level one!)

KILLER RING

Producer: **Reaktör**
Retail Price: **£4.99**
Author: **Tony Crowther (The Byte Engineers)**

We all know what Killer Rings are – large fried doughnuts in space, generally attacked by a menagerie of toads, bunny heads, flop-eared whatchamacallits, and orbs. Some of these approach in a series of attack waves from the top of the screen, whilst others move in an unpredictable fashion from any screen direction. Others, if they pass off the screen, scroll once more into view from the other side.

The killer ring has three lives, lost on contact with another occupant of the screen, or the pulses that they fire. All the attackers can be destroyed, though they require sustained hits, and their death throes award you points, with bonuses added when sufficient numbers have been destroyed.

When the required number of attack waves has been destroyed the killer ring is confronted by a spaceman sitting in a hovering craft. The defensive underbelly of the ship can be blasted through and the spaceman killed. With this done, the killer ring returns to take on the first attacking wave once more.

For added difficulty, the vertically scrolling antimatter beam can be activated, which nullifies the killer ring's initial blast, and must be pierced before the blaster can reach its targets.

CRITICISM

● **" Oh wow! A updated version of the original Space Invaders game. Shoot-'em-up games have always been a favourite of mine, but I can't say this had very much appeal. The alien's are a bit nastier and the sound is very much improved, but that's about all. Amazingly, though, it still has loads of addictiveness, and gave me lots of hours of fun, but I think the thrill of this type of game has become a little cobwebbed. "**

GARETH

●" Killer Ring *is really just a glorified Space Invaders* **game, with a Phoenix** *style bit thrown in. The graphics are quite well defined but when a huddle of monsters stay in one place it's hard to pick them out. The colour is monochromatic but it has a multi-coloured title screen. The best element is the sound by WE M.U.S.I.C. – it's fantastic. This game would be more suited to a budget price, but it isn't that bad.* "

NICK

●" Although there have been some changes since we were last there, the aliens have got meaner and bullets have become a new-fangled laser, it's immediately obvious where *Killer Ring*'s roots are firmly planted. I liked the improvements over the old style Invaders, especially the music, and *Killer Ring* can be very addictive if you've got a worthy competitor to hi-score against. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: monochromatic (a colour on black)
Graphics: large and well defined, but simple shapes
Sound: no 48K music, but excellent 128 tune, average spot FX
Skill levels: two
Screens: seven attack waves to go through ten times
General rating: an unashamedly old shoot-'em-up which manages to be moderately addictive, but with a short playing life

Presentation	61%
Graphics	55%
Playability	52%
Addictive qualities	49%
Overall	47%

HADES NEBULA

Producer: **Nexus**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Paranoid Software**

Hades, evil emperor of the dying planet Sodini, having heard that ten Earth colony ships have been despatched to a distant corner of the Universe, decides to ambush the fleet, enslave the colonists and sell off the vessels for scrap.

But Colony ship number seven suffers a computer malfunction, and arriving at its destination – the Orion Nebula – two years ahead of schedule, continues with its mission regardless. To the colonists' surprise the nebula is occupied by a Hades mining fleet, named 'Hades Nebula' after the Emperor.

Alerted to their presence, the mining fleet attacks. Colony Seven has but one choice – to send out their only form of defence, a single-pilot terran fighter, against the entire hostile fleet.

The confrontation takes place over the vertically scrolling surfaces of a planet and a battle cruiser. The colony's craft is under constant attack from Hades starfighters and ground-based insectoid tanks.

The fighter's speed, weaponry and shields can be improved by blasting specific ground installations and collecting the equipment pods which they contain. This equipment then automatically attaches and activates itself, making the lone ship a force to be reckoned with.

The ultimate goal is to destroy as many ground installations, fighters, mining craft and ground ships as possible within the single fighter's five incarnations.

RICKY

" The bas-relief graphics in Hades Nebula **are its only saving grace – apart from that it's a very average product. The screen scrolls at around three pixels a time making it jerky enough to be offputting. The ship is too large and sluggish to be able to dodge the countless enemy missiles coming from every angle. Although it's possible to build up your firepower, losing a life takes it all away, making it all seem rather pointless. It's also annoying that the score line obscures part of the screen, it may look good but doesn't help in actually playing the game. "**

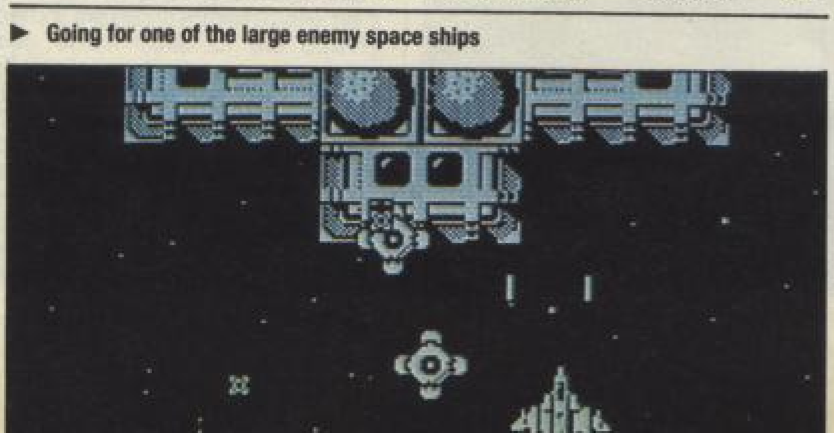
PAUL

" This game is just far too hard for my liking. Even as an above average Hades Nebula **player I found the game very restricting and not much fun at all. The first rule of writing any game is to give players rewards, so they will persist. The only reward in this game is flicking back to the title screen – no 'game over' message, no 'level x' message, and not even a little jingle. Due to these major flaws** Hades Nebula **not only lacks in atmosphere but also falls down over addictiveness. Nice name shame about the disappointing game. "**

BEN

" This suffers horribly from the Slap Fight **syndrome, it's hard to tell what the hell's going on – unlike** Slap Fight**, though, there isn't much of a game here. At the start your craft moves so slowly that it's hard to get far enough to pick up extra speed. When you do, things get a little more playable, but not much, as at speed you simply can't distinguish the alien bullets from everything else. Strangely it's fairly addictive, but all in all** Hades Nebula **isn't worth the eye strain. "**

► Going for one of the large enemy space ships

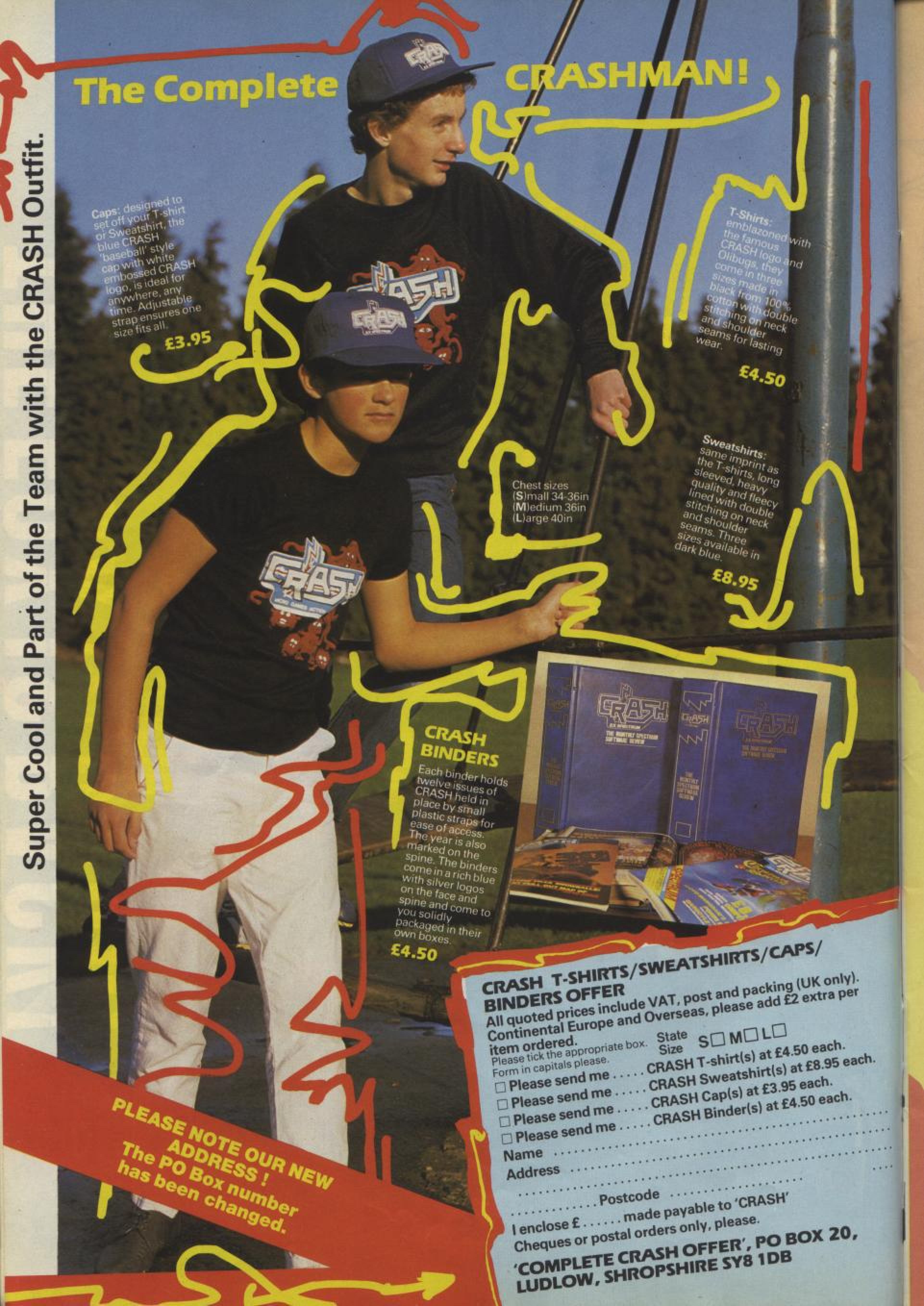


COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: monochromatic blue or yellow and black
Graphics: nice bas-relief, but slow, jerky scrolling distracts
Sound: ordinary spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: two scrolling areas
General rating: gameplay elements detract from an otherwise average shoot-'em-up

Presentation	61%
Graphics	67%
Playability	52%
Addictive qualities	51%
Overall	51%


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LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM



The humid heat of late June has obviously got to everyone, tempers flare, words are spoken. The tone of this FORUM is characterised by the outrage caused by Oliver Frey's cover for the June CRASH – the *Barbarian* picture. Another prime topic is the inclusion of video reviews within CRASH – and there's a points of view debate on the subject. Meanwhile, back to letters on other subjects. My choice for this month's prizewinning letter looks at reviewing budget games . . .

JUDGING BY PRICE

Dear Lloyd
A word on budget games. Their quality has improved lately, but essentially most are not worth the money. Many readers will burst out at this point, 'What about *Feud*, *Zub* and *Amaurote*?' They satisfy in depth, but do you really want to trudge around 2500 screens as in *Amaurote*?

Budget games usually have frills to attract the buyer, but bore after a few plays, then the buyer considers £1.99 was not much wasted and just dismisses the purchase as a small mistake.

If all budget games were raised to £2.99, a higher standard both in packaging and game would be demanded, and eventually produced. I think that many budget games get high reviews because their price is taken into account. If a game is good, it should be compared on the level of full-price games, giving a more realistic idea of its gameplay. Don't judge games by their prices.

Many would be interested to know that I own a Sega System, as I study in England and live in Hong Kong where it is available. I've got games such as *Hang On*, *Quartet* and *Choplifter*, with *Enduro Racer*, *Wonder Boy* and *Space Harrier* to come soon. The cartridges and cards are expensive, around £20, but I think it is a better bet than the Nintendo for the memory, graphics and sophistication.
Alex Kaung, Winchester College, Winchester

You'll have noticed, Alex, that CRASH has taken price into account (or rather lost it). £1.99 really doesn't leave much for the development of reasonable and original games, and I will be surprised if we continue to see £1.99 games for much longer, unless they're old ones or real rubbish. Still, you have a choice of £30 worth of software for Letter of the Month, so let me know what you would like to receive!
LM

ON SPEED AND COLOUR

Dear Lloyd
Breaking the tradition set by my friend and prime fool Tom Evans in the Christmas issue, I have several points to discuss.

Firstly, what exactly does Shashy Dass mean by a Speccy running at 50m/s? If, as I suspect, he means frm/s then the actual processor runs at a far higher speed that this. It is merely the screen update that is this slow. Also, what is so difficult about reading a single byte joystick input, rather than several blocks (of half a row each) of key input? It seems to me that he knows a little about a lot, but not enough about anything, as the cliché goes.

Secondly, on to a letter by D Charles in the June Issue (by the way it's nice to see the covers returning to Oli's usual standard), the 64 also has a white noise facility, and it's often used brilliantly (opening sequence of *Uridium*). Also the Commodore has 16 colours, including five greys, four blues and three reds. I'm sure it matches up to anything the Sega has to offer. As for variety of games, I don't think you'll get much variety with each game costing 25 quid.

If you compare the Sega or Nintendo to the Amiga or ST (especially with the new prices) it's obvious the latter win on all counts (the Amiga's 4096 colours, four-channel sound and its fantastic speed), and these are the way forward for computers in general.
Robert Hayden, Lings, Northampton

I don't think games consoles are seen as a 'way forward', rather more as an additional means of playing games. Whether computer owners will also want a console is going to be interesting to observe. But in the end, it's going to be the attitudes of Atari, Sega, Mattel and Konix to third-party software producers that will make the machines popular or consigned to the fad bin. Presently none of them seems to be making the market truly available for mass games production to back the potential hardware sales.
LM

SELLING UP

Dear Lloyd
This is being written on an Amstrad CPC6128 using *Protext*, and is probably the last letter I will ever write on this machine. The reason . . . selling up. I'm very disillusioned with Amstrad as a company and the whole scene, so I'm deserting Sugar and Co for the lofty heights of the Atari 520 ST, which I happened to see three pages of advertising for in the current CRASH. However, I will always be a Speccy fan through thick and thin and hope the two will keep each other company.

I believe quite firmly that the ST will become the next Speccy. I's an ideal games machine, and has all the qualities that the Spectrum presented us with when it first came out: the best colour, graphics, sound, memory and (most importantly) the best price of any machine around.

I don't believe that Alan Sugar's 'enhanced' Spectrums will hold any water with anyone, they'll just become more dead ducks like the CPC464.

I read a leading Atari magazine the other day, listings filled convenient gaps, there were only three games reviews in the whole thing and a couple of hardware articles, reams and reams about the General Election and not a great deal else. Would it not be possible to create a Newsfield Atari ST magazine, either separately or lumped on the back of CRASH? This may sound crazy, but from what the grapevine tells me, vast numbers of Speccy owners are upgrading to the ST. The fact that Atari have chosen to advertise in CRASH is evidence of their own faith in the fact.

Although at present the Speccy market looks as healthy as it was in 1985, it's unlikely to be the same way in 1989 . . . seven years must be the limit of any machine's earthly endurance.

Anyway, to sum up, please keep CRASH going even if you do have to drop every other title! It's really developed a cult following.
Richard Harrison, Forest Hill, London

There's little doubt in my mind that Amstrad's high-street sales techniques have undone confidence in their machines and created an unstable base. Computers aren't hi-fi stacks or high-tech fridges. The pricing of the plus three is all wrong and the disk it's based around (same for the Amstrad CPC range) is the wrong one – too expensive for realistic software prices. So it remains to be seen whether the Spectrum's life has been extended by the new machine.

As for the Atari ST, well it won't be CRASH, but our new magazine, out in September (see ad in this issue), called THE GAMES MACHINE, will be catering for Atari as well as Amiga, and all the popular 8-bit machines as well. Perhaps it will answer your prayers. In the meantime, CRASH is ploughing happily ahead, and for many years yet.
LM

AND ULTIMATELY— COLOUR

Dear Lloyd
Wow! What is this? CRASH!? All in colour! Great! I think the all-colour June ish is really good! It was about time – keep it up! All in all I think that CRASH is getting better and better.

One thing annoys me though – every time Ultimate releases a game reviewers jump down their throats saying 'Ultimate was great once blah, but now their games are crap, unplayable, blah . . . '

Will you stop comparing Ultimate games? I'm really sick of hearing Ultimate was and isn't any more. Why don't you just lay off and judge their games on their own merits?

I did read a normal unbiased review in the June ish and I must give credit to Ben who wrote it without crying over Ultimate's past success.
Paul Favero, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Ben is such a cool guy, he just can't help being wonderful and unbiased . . . Ultimate, surely, are victims of their past successes. And that past isn't so long ago that on a purely informational level people are bound to compare and pass judgement. However, I think you're right that the games should be assessed on their merits, and not on how they compare to previous Ultimate hits.
LM





THE CHANGING CRASH



TERMINAL VIDEOS, MAN

Dear Lloyd
I think CRASH has changed during its 3½ years. I wouldn't say it's changing for the worse, more . . . maturing, yes, into an established magazine.

I remember when CRASH had a fresh and vital approach to the new, fast-growing industry. That's why it was so exciting, it was all happening so fast, and everyone was so naive.

Nobody's fault though, the same things happen to rock bands. After some time of success with a cult following, CRASH seemed to do a U2, a Simple Minds. Then the mag took on a more glossy feel, more commercialised, it . . . 'sold out'. Now I'm sure newcomers to CRASH, Simple Minds and U2 are happy with things as they are, but spare a thought for early fans, who yearn for the 'raw' days of LIFE IN A DAY, and the LIVING GUIDE.

It may not be the mag that's lost its feel, maybe it is I who have aged, losing touch with computers etc, but I know I certainly don't get the kicks I used to when playing today's hits. How can the days of *The Hobbit*, *Manic Miner*, *Jetman* and *Match Point* ever be equalled?

Still, that's not to say that CRASH isn't still by far the best computer magazine available, it just seems to have lost its original appeal – and *please* keep video reviews out of CRASH. It *is* after all a computer mag.
C Stafford, Grimsby, South Humberside

I think we would all have become very bored if CRASH hadn't changed over the years. Everyone strives to improve, and sometimes the changes are for the better, sometimes not so much (or not so appreciated). Some of the newer features in CRASH recently have resulted in letters on the subject, mostly about video reviews . . .

I think that (reviewing videos) is a great idea,

. . . writes **Alan Wardle** *from Belper, Derby, but adds . . .*

although it would be better if you could just review computer tie-ins such as *Cobra*, *Highlander*, *Aliens*, *Back to the Future* and also *Short Circuit* and *Top Gun* when they are released. This way it would still concern computers and everybody would be happy. You could also award a Smash for the most outstanding video reviewed.

That's a positive reaction from Alan – unlike that from **Mark Neumann**, *Cleethorpes, who gasps . . .*

Arrgh! Video reviews in a computer mag, what a bummer!

Oh dear Mark, why so?

If people, especially CRASH readers, want video reviews all they have to do is buy a mag in the newsagents. Enough said, I hope the video review on page 130 was your first and last.

Sorry, Mark, it wasn't. Fair to say, though, that the rest of CRASH was great according to Mark.

Other negatives include **Andrew Rimmer** *who is sad to see* **LM** *go, but thinks we shouldn't . . .*

spoil CRASH (or ZZAP!) with **LM** mutations. CRASH is a Spectrum software magazine as you have striven to keep it for years – there is no room for ANYTHING ELSE!

And then there's **Ashley Barnett** *from Otley, West Yorks, who reckons it's . . .*

a dumb idea and I hope it is stopped. Whilst I'm in a mad mood I'll tell you that TERMINAL MAN and TAMARA KNIGHT are the biggest set of naff, pathetic reading I have ever seen in CRASH and for the sake of life itself, please get rid of them. Before you tell me to go for slagging you off (which is why you won't print this letter) I'm not all bad, for I love the colour splashes everywhere and the logos.

Nice to know we can please! **Stephen Hibbert** *of Ringwood, Hampshire, agrees when he comes to the short point . . .*

Yours, hoping you'll drop the videos and Tamara boredom.

Well, pausing the video for a moment, Tamara hasn't fared too well to be honest (sorry Mel) although some have enjoyed it, but feelings on THE TERMINAL MAN tend to be violently opposed . . .

Wow! Mega! Cool! Great! (What's this guy blabbering on about? I hear you cry). TERMINAL MAN. That's what. I have never read anything as enthralling as this. (I am now reading it for the ninth time!). It is just pure brilliance (Oli Frey deserves a pay rise for his efforts!).

. . . writes **Richard Davy** *from Silsden, West Yorks, adding,..*

Some people obviously do not know what a good story is. And if, as they say, CRASH is about computer gaming, then why is JETMAN printed? The difference between the two strips is humour but NEITHER has anything to do with computer gaming, they are included to make the mag more interesting.

Right in one, Richard. I subscribe to the view that a magazine ought to stick primarily to the subject it purports to cover, but it can also create a ghetto mentality, if (often) related subjects are thrown out because they're not directly concerned with the prime subject. Richard returns forcefully to the video argument . . .

You've probably received a lot of hate mail concerning your experiment to review latest videos. Well, I am all FOR it. I am now awaiting my local video shop to get *The Monster Club*. Since it's once in a blue moon I hire a video, I may not have known about *TMC* and so would miss something special!

Video reviews make a great change from reading the usual stuff. No-one wants to play games all day, people need to relax you know, and what better way than to watch a video? Instead of just going out and getting a video you don't know whether you'll like or not, it's easier to read a review of a video and then get it. That way you won't waste your money. Without a review you may not want to take a chance, and be bored stiff for the night watching the usual drivel.

As Mark Neumann said, you can buy video mags which contain reviews, but then you have to buy all of the mag for just a page or two, and without sounding condescending (he said patronisingly), most dedicated video mags I've read are more interested in hardware and soft pornography ads, giving only a few lines to reviews. Still, just a couple more points; **Alan Wardle** *would like . . .*

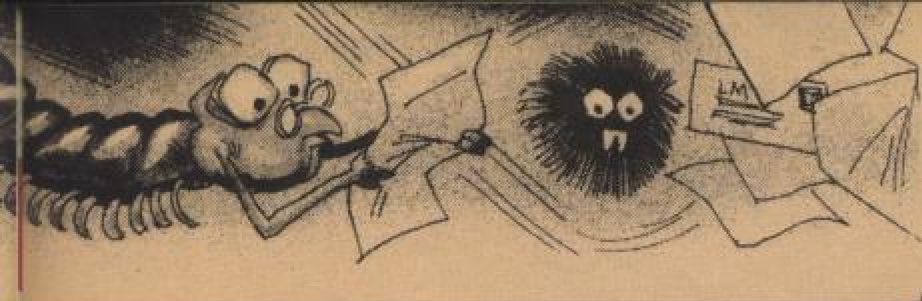
a video computer chart every month to see how the film is doing in the video world alongside its computer game counterpart.

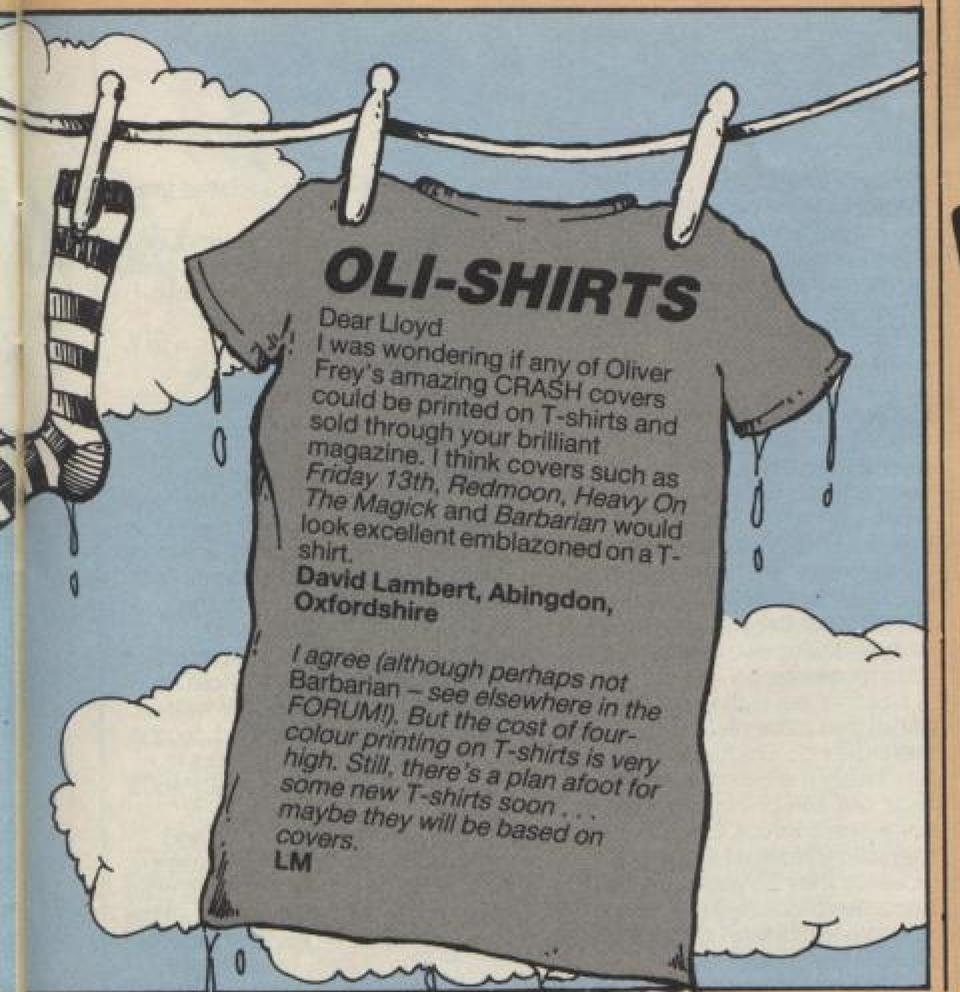
and **Alex Kaung** *of Winchester says . . .*

If you want to include film reviews, please can you print some stills of the reviewed film?

Absolutely, Alex. That first try-out page was a bit lacking, we'll get more pictures together in future. Thank you everyone who took part in the debate. No doubt there'll be more letters yet, and a clearer picture may emerge, but I would judge video reviews in CRASH are more popular than less, by a nudge at the moment.
LM







OLI-SHIRTS

Dear Lloyd
I was wondering if any of Oliver Frey's amazing CRASH covers could be printed on T-shirts and sold through your brilliant magazine. I think covers such as *Friday 13th*, *Redmoon*, *Heavy On The Magick* and *Barbarian* would look excellent emblazoned on a T-shirt.
David Lambert, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

I agree (although perhaps not Barbarian – see elsewhere in the FORUM!). But the cost of four-colour printing on T-shirts is very high. Still, there's a plan afoot for some new T-shirts soon . . . maybe they will be based on covers.
LM

STRIKE FOR ART!

Dear Sir
I've been moved to write over Robin Candy's fine article on the software industry's state. I, too, have noticed the decline of the industry, as it moves from a backroom cottage affair to the million pound market it is today. And may I say it's pretty awful at present.

In the good old days, when people thought that digital watches were pretty neat, and 16K was large, the software industry was exciting, dynamic and full of people exploring a field of art entertainment never before seen. As Candy's article shows, independent companies fought for your cash, and only survived if the product was good enough. A company's existence relied on its next release. That is why the design flair and ingenuity was so apparent.

However, as more morons started buying computers for games alone individual development declined and the smaller more adventurous companies went under. Behind the scenes mergers and takeover deals became common place. How can six or seven companies control such a vibrant marketplace?.

Now is the time for action. Here's my proposal. No CRASH reader should buy any software for one month. Hopefully this should hit the profit margins and cause the large companies to think again. With unity it could be done. We have the power to bring the software companies to their knees, if we act as one.

Think it over. Soon there may only be ONE software house controlling all the others. Then what?
Stephen Hibbert, Ringwood, Hampshire

This simply isn't the way to go about it, Stephen. If your family was denied their source of income for one month, you would all die of starvation, unless your reserves were strong enough. Profit margins can be tight and it doesn't take much to damage them irreparably. It's also extremely unlikely that a single software conglomerate will ever control all software production. No, you must purchase selectively (and this happens anyway) so that poor games fail.

All software houses are keen to succeed, so don't think they turn a blind eye to the market place – they know as well as you do what are poor games. Okay, now and then they put out a piece of rubbish in the cynical knowledge that it will sell for a while, because they spent money doing the game and want to get something back, but they learn from that. It's in their own interests that games are good, do well and make more money. Striking for better games won't achieve anything (if it could ever be arranged in the first place), other than the potential death of the industry altogether.
LM



BARBARITY IN BARBARIAN

Dear Sirs and Oliver Frey
I'm writing about the front cover and the majority of the visual contents of CRASH, June issue.

Do you realise that nine- and ten-year-olds and even younger children see this mag? Do you realise what you are doing to their subconscious, in fact their conscience direct. You are dealing with EVIL. There is nothing, absolutely nothing good about any of these pictures or even games. They are kill, kill, kill, fear and more fear, hatred and immorality of every kind.

Computers were meant for computing. I know these games are a very profitable side line, but moral responsibility is far more important than money. We know that the Devil is the prince of this world although his time is limited, but unfortunately he is very clever and uses many people to his gain, especially those in the media. Crime has risen appallingly in recent years, with a horrific rise in 13-to-15-year-olds involved in VIOLENT crimes. They feed off this kind of stuff.

I ask you as a very concerned parent and christian, clean up your mag, refuse to print foul pictures and games, such things are noted in heaven and God will finally bring them into judgement.

Please help bring back LOVE. Make a stand, be different and you'll be rewarded.
Mrs Angela Cook, Isle Of Wight

Yes, the Barbarian *backlash got off to a flying start. I hadn't actually recognised that we were dealing with the prince of this world, but that Oliver Frey's cover would raise some eyebrows seemed inevitable.* **P S Eilds** *from Manchester, who says he's 16 and not easily disturbed or offended, was compelled to write . . .*

. . . what I saw absolutely disgusted me – so much so that I have withdrawn my regular order of your magazine. I consider (the cover) to be absolutely horrific, barbaric, over the top and totally unnecessary.

A view held by many of the letters I received . . .

It was a disgusting, bloodthirsty picture of two men plastered in blood, one looking very proud, stabbing another man. For the life of me I cannot understand why you had such a barbaric picture as that on what is supposed to be a computer mag . . .

wrote **Ashley Barnett** *from Otley, West Yorks, echoing the sentiments of an age-old argument as to what constitutes the nature of computing . . .*

I'm sure that Oli Frey can find better things to draw. A nice picture illustrating the only Smash (you never seem to illustrate adventure Smashes do you?) *Hydrofool* would have been appreciated . . .

suggested **Gerard Callaghan** *from Belfast. Actually there have been adventure covers,* Hobbit *and* H.U.R.G., Red Moon *and some Gargoyle Games-related pictures, but meanwhile, the tirade continues . . .*

The picture vividly advertising *Barbarian* is particularly distasteful and violent. The fact that it was inflicted on any of your readers that like your magazine for its content is almost obscene.
Mike Bear, Littlehampton, W Sussex.

I was horrified by this month's gory cover! What a revolting, obscene picture to put in full colour on the front of such a popular mag, read by so many youngsters. It made me feel sick!
Mrs P D Crick, Chipping Sodbury, Avon.

I am cancelling my order with my newsagent for your magazine. I tolerated the previous depiction of overproportioned females and read, with some amusement, the reports of other people and their reactions. However, enough is enough and I am not prepared to subsidise sick artists employed by sick magazines. I will not even buy the next issue to see if this letter is printed. **Philip Raymond Baker**, Stockport, Cheshire

We were shocked and appalled by your complete lack of taste and can hardly comprehend the total absence of morality and judgement which must have led you to consider it a fitting cover picture for such a magazine. CRASH will no longer be on our shopping list and hopefully many other people will feel the same, so that people like you, who apparently seek to degrade young minds, will be put out of business.
Elizabeth Fox, Portsmouth.

It becomes apparent that most letters have been written by concerned parents, and after the initial attack on morals, judgement and taste, most correspondents turned to the inevitable 'warping of innocent minds'. **P S Eilds** *is a . . .*

. . . firm believer in the theory that continual exposure to realistic violence creates a passive attitude towards it. This does not mean that children watching Tom and Jerry become excessively violent, for even the youngest child is able to realise that a cat which is squashed by a steam roller cannot inflate itself by sticking a thumb in its mouth and blowing. However, continual exposure to scenes involving two bloody men, one of whom is skewering the other through the chest with a knife, will – sooner or later – make its viewer come to accept such intolerable circumstances; maybe even to the level where they are capable of committing the act themselves.

Actually, the picture does not depict anyone being 'skewered' – the artist didn't go that far at all, but it is the implication that seems to worry the most. **M K Cherrill** *from Wantage, Oxfordshire, buys CRASH for himself, but has an eight-year-old son, and daughter of five . . .*

Did you consider what effect it would have on my daughter? Look also at the picture on page 74, did you consider what this could do to a five-year-old's vivid imagination? You may say 'keep it away from them' but how? It's on the shelves of every newsagent. What about the younger brothers and sisters of all the kids that buy your magazine?

I cannot accept, in my own mind, that older children and teenagers go unaffected. Obviously it won't make them dash out and plunge a sword into someone's throat, but, could it be that with continual exposure to violence their acceptance of it becomes more likely?

According to **Mrs P D Crick**, *even older boys need . . .*

. . . to be protected from such an obscene picture. My son (13) started buying CRASH on a regular basis from day one of its publication, so he was not even a teenager then – I would have banned it for ever had it such a cover picture on it then!

Please show some responsibility to your younger readers, don't glory in the obscene which upholds blood and gore as normal. Please, on behalf of the many innocent kids who read the magazine, please be more careful.

I've always found kids to be far from innocent, though I'm aware from my own childhood that a morbid interest can be generated by some pictures, although what holds terrors for one may be completely disregarded by another. **P S Eilds** *is in . . .*

. . . no doubt that you will receive hundreds of letters from irate 13-year-olds who claim they are totally unaffected by such things, and that they are exposed to similar scenes nearly every day of their lives.

Perhaps we will, but that will be after this column has appeared. Meanwhile, it wasn't only Oliver Frey's cover that attracted irate flak, as **Elizabeth Fox** *suggests when she says . . .*

Perhaps the game, *Barbarian*, is meant to be a spoof on violence, but in no way is that apparent in the cover picture, nor in the semipornographic picture advertising the game inside the magazine.

Palace's advert has also caused several raised eyebrows within the industry (and raised again the point about the nature of computing itself and the suitability or relevance of imagery used). But **Mike Bear** *went further, and did the obvious – have a look at the game . . .*

If (the cover) was not bad enough I decided to see what type of game you were choosing to promote. I found the picture repeated, WITHOUT COMMENT on page 7, and the review tucked away on page 114. Obviously not the main feature! So why the picture?

You're suggesting it was cynical exploitation of an image. Not really, it just seemed like the most exciting cover image for that issue, and CRASH often covers a feature that isn't top of the contents list. When Daddy Bear got to the review itself, he found that . . .

. . . sadly, what I had expected. That what was on the whole an objective and reasonably written article had been 'coloured' by one of your three commentators in a particularly disturbing way. Paul, a 21-year-old I believe, openly thrived on the 'convincing and proper movement' of the figures in the game (like heads coming off!). 'Games like this really bring out the animal in me,' he eagerly reports, '*Barbarian* is easy to escape in and hard to get away from,' is his pronouncement.

IS THIS THE SORT OF REACTION THAT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AMONG 13-to-18-year-olds which comprise your main readership age group? I suppose I could be grateful that Ben & Ricky, the two younger Commentators, were not as 'turned on'.

Leaping to his defence, I have to say that of all CRASH reviewers, Paul is probably the most responsible in his personal attitude. It's vital to recognise that these games, even the most violent, are only an extension of what has constituted children's fare for generations, and their reactions to them are as individual as there are persons viewing them.

The outrage occasioned by Oliver Frey's Barbarian *cover gave an opportunity to expand some readers' feelings into other areas. Having noted that . . .*

. . . your covers are always the same big butch chap sticking a sword into some unfortunate creature with blood all over the place . . .

John Hynes *from Wigan, goes on to add . . .*

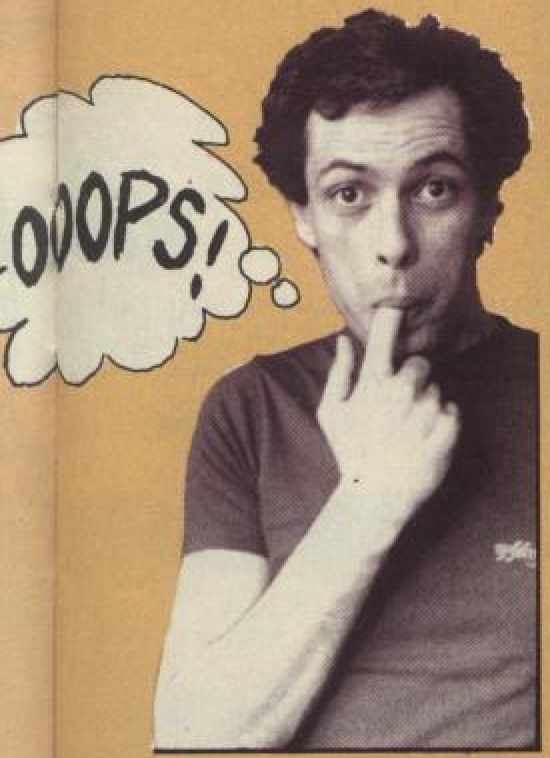
THE TERMINAL MAN is just the same blood, blood and more blood. Please tell Oliver Frey to do something different. I think your mag is brill apart from Oliver Frey's love of blood.

That's a bit of an exaggeration, John. The covers hardly ever have blood on them, and certainly aren't the same chap killing someone. **P S Eilds** *goes further though . . .*

I would also like to question the suitability and relevance of some of Oliver's artwork which accompanies ADVENTURE TRAIL. I know of very few



BOUNCED OUT



adventure games (come to think of it, none) which involve men decapitating each other, or women sacrificing men shackled to stone tables, or any of the other gruesome scenes which can be seen by flipping through some back issues. In fact, I would bring into question Oliver Frey's overall suitability as an artist for a computer magazine. He seems to take some kind of morbid pleasure in creating the most horrific or sinister pictures he can imagine.

Again, a bit exaggerated. Like many commercial (and uncommercial) artists, Oliver enjoys the dynamics of action. Some, like **Ashley Barnett**, *however, see Oliver less as some sinister force behind the airbrush and more . . .*

a very child-minded art editor who insists on doodling space age pictures that belong in *2000 AD* comic. I am referring to the chart page of course. But the June cover does nothing for the image of CRASH. Your art editor must have some kind of warped mind to come up with a picture of such bad taste.

But Ashley offered another complaint . . .

As well as being a bloody sight to look at, it is embarrassing to buy. It did not look like a computer mag at all and to show it at the counter before paying for it is an embarrassing experience, for it makes the buyer look like a gruesome minded person.

Nonetheless, indications are that the issue sold very well, although I have to be fair to everyone's views here printed, and add that representatives of W H Smith have requested that we don't use a cover quite like it again. I think it is largely a matter of personal taste – I certainly reject that the cover is any indication of Satan working his ways through us, I'd like to feel we're much more free than that – but I accept that if you work with sensitive images, then you're going to upset some people. A last word from **M K Cherrill** . . .

This world is not quite the nice place it used to be. Children will be subjected, soon enough, to what ever horror awaits them. What right have we to subject them, in their most fragile and informative moments, to this type of picture?

Don't think I'm splitting hairs, but I would reckon this world is about as nice as it has ever been. Was it better when ten-year-olds were sent down the mines as slave labour, rather than attending school and playing computer games in their spare time? I doubt it.
LM

NO JOY

Dear Lloyd
I recently purchased a Spectravideo Joyball, but I'm having trouble finding a compatible interface. I've already tried a Bud interface and a Kempston one, both work, but only with certain games. Are there any interfaces which are compatible?
David Dewar, Broxbourne, Herts

We've used a Kempston too, which seemed to work with all the games tried out last month. However, the interface which does work all the time is the Frel Comcon (available from Frel, 1 Hockeys Mill, Temeside, Ludlow, Shropshire). You will note that the fire function LEDs do not operate properly on the Joyball used with an interface into the Spectrum, but this doesn't make any difference to the controller's proper directional and firing functions.
LM

128 APPRECIATE

Dear Lloyd
What the hell's going on in your review section? You start a box for 128 game features, then after only a month – zap! it vanishes. Now I think I've a reasonable solution to the 128 problem – simply go back to the 16/48K solution of putting a little heading between retail price and author.
I hope you take this into consideration as there are still the rare games which don't load on a 128.
J A Morrison, Newcastle

Part of the problem has been that Ben Stone, responsible for the 128 boxes, has been absent for two issues due to one thing and another. We said that 128 boxes would appear on major reviews, but where sound or extra features have been present on 128 versions, we've said so in the comments at the end of the review. In most cases where there's no reference to 128 it's because either there isn't a 128 version or there's no appreciable difference between it and the 48K.
LM

Dear Lloyd
Where's Thing's review (Issue 41)? According to the Thing competition on page 81, there's a review of *Thing Bounces Back* on page 14. Yet on page 14 is a review of *Hydrofool*! In MERELY MANGRAM, you state that *Howard the Duck* arrived too late for a review. Are you sure it wasn't *Thing* that was late. *Howard* is reviewed on page 110 – strange.
Your review of *Krakout* a few issues ago priced the game at £4.99, yet the advertisements price it at £7.99! Who is right? Boots are also overpricing on *Leaderboard* (£9.95).
Richard (Loony) Davy, Silsden, W Yorks
PS About a year ago, there was a bit in your news about a game that was to emerge from that brilliant group Sigue Sigue Sputnik! Since then. I have heard nothing. Am I ever going to see their computer game?

I guess not Richard – will we ever hear another single from them? But back to bouncing Thing. These Things happen occasionally, you see when the comp was written we were expecting the game for review any second, but it turned out not to be quite ready, so Hydrofool *got its slot – and* Howard *arrived on the last day of schedule, a few hours after my MERELY MANGRAM piece had winged its way printerwards. Some days you just can't win. The* Krakout *review got the price wrong, but I believe there was a price change at the last moment.*
LM

What a lot of work that was! You don't believe me perhaps, but it take ages compiling the bits and pieces from so many letters into a (hopefully) coherent whole. On the other hand, a vibrant CRASH FORUM is what I want. Next month there will be some correspondence from those who thought the *Barbarian* cover was great, fulfilling and wholesome – perhaps . . .
Meantime, keep writing to LLOYD MANGRAM, CRASH FORUM, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.*

RUN IT AGAIN!

It's back, after almost three years in the cupboard. CRASH presents, by popular demand, the return of the legendary comparison test.



DYNAMIC DUNGEONS

THOSE GAUNTLET CLONES

Dandy
Druid
Storm
Avenger
Ranarama
How To Be A Hero
Into The Eagle's Nest

But do great minds really think alike or is it just good old-fashioned plagiarism? RICKY EDDY and ROBIN CANDY discuss the case of the *Gauntlet* clones.

WHY were we suddenly deluged by a flood of *Gauntlet*-inspired games? The *Gauntlet* variants have established their own niche, somewhere between arcade adventures and shoot-'em-ups.

Maybe it's a little unfair to call them all *Gauntlet* games – it makes them sound like rip-offs. (Maybe they are.) But with the alternative name being bird's-eye-view-shoot-'em-ups-in-dungeons, we'll stick to *Gauntlet*, with apologies to the 'unofficial' versions.

How do you go about *Gauntlet*-spotting?

Well, a *Gauntlet* game is seen from overhead and pits the player against a strong opposition. There's usually some kind of quest, often an obscure one; more often than not, it's to escape from somewhere. En route you pick up objects such as health potions, power pills, treasure and ammunition to increase your character's efficiency.

And, if we're really going by the book, the game should have a two-player option.

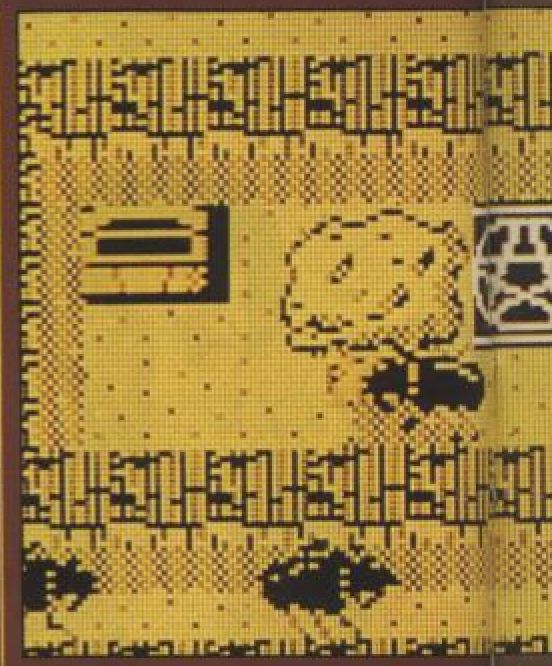
So grab your joystick and let's enter those perilous dungeons – again.

GAUNTLET
US Gold

ROBIN ■ *Gauntlet*, the official conversion, arrived in CRASH Towers just in time for the February 1987 issue – where it was immediately Smashed and hailed as 'a much better game than any of its clones'. It follows the arcade original quite faithfully, with a few alterations due to the limitations of the Spectrum.

The original is a one-to-four-player game where each player plays simultaneously. The abilities of the characters vary – for instance, some are better at combat than others. The aim is to rush about the spacious mazes hacking at anything that moves and eating anything that doesn't. You have to find a key to get into some parts of the maze.

There are six groups of nasties out to stop you. At the top of the tree comes Death himself, who can only be killed if you have a magic potion; the other baddies can be killed in hand-to-hand combat, or shot.



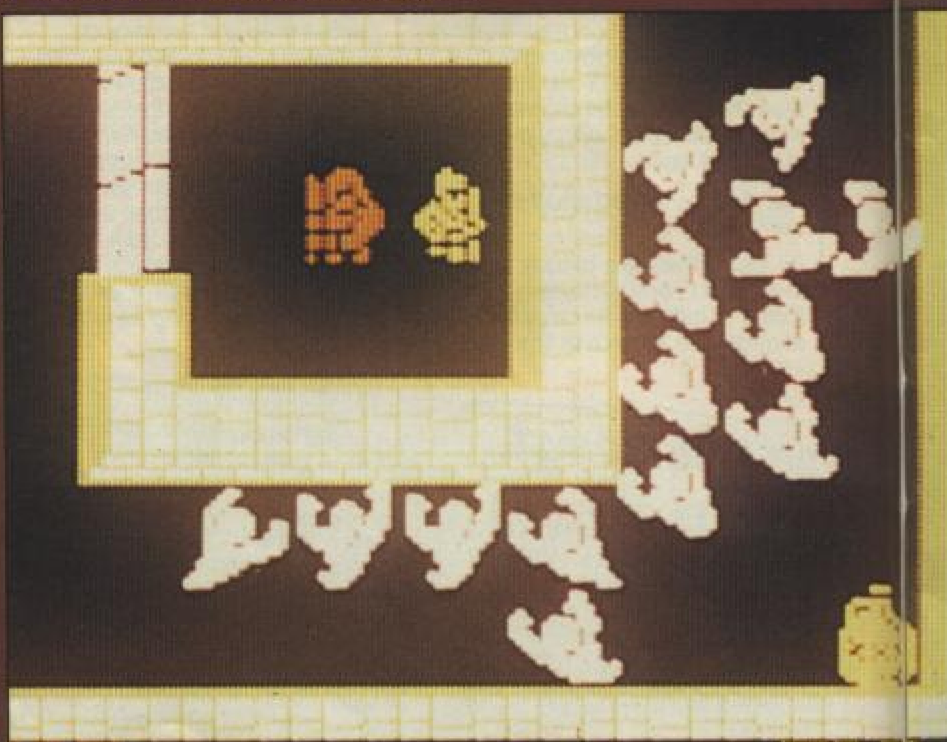
DRUID
Firebird

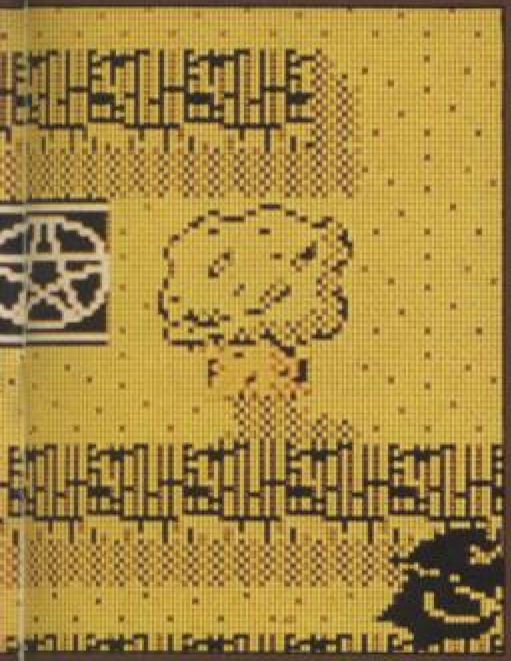
RICKY ■ *Druid* was the first successful go at a *Gauntlet* game, earning itself a CRASH Smash in the Christmas Special last year. The game centres on a druid with the pretty horrendous task of killing off the Princess Of Darkness and her evil minions.

The programmers, Andy Bailey and Dean Carter, included three different forms of weapons that the druid can access: water, fire and electricity. Scattered around the playing area are chests containing magic spells which boost the druid's powers.

There are eight levels of frantic action, and a neat little twist in two-player mode: one player takes control of the Golem, an apelike beast who simply kills off the druid's foes.

► US Gold's *Gauntlet*: run it again, and again . . .





▶ **The first of the flood: Firebird's *Druid***

The graphical representation of the many characters is good, mainly in black; however, the colourful backdrops add spice to the scenery. The informative status panel gives *Druid* an advantage over the other *Gauntlet* games.

Of all the *Gauntlet* clones, this one certainly stands out as both a good adaptation of a theme and an enjoyable game in its own right.

ROBIN ■ This was one of the first *Gauntlet*-type games available, and it was highly rated in CRASH. The main difference between *Druid* and *Gauntlet* is the spell-casting (later reproduced in *Ranarama*), a novel feature. Graphically it's excellent, but the sound is a little disappointing. Highly playable and addictive, it's certainly one of the better clones around.

AVENGER
Gremlin

RICKY ■ Loosely labelled *Way Of The Tiger II, Avenger* romped in for the Christmas *Gauntlet* craze. It follows the standard routine for *Gauntlet* games, but with an Oriental flavour. You play a ninja warrior out to avenge the death of his father (known locally as Grasshopper, because of the way he clicked his knees together).

Anyway . . . scroll on. And that's exactly what you're out to find – the scrolls that will save Kwon (who just happens to be a rather important god) from being lost in eternal hell. Why this ninja should want to help him is beyond us, but that's what you've got to do.

The action is set in and around the Quench Heart Castle, where three Guardians which must be annihilated to locate the scrolls. The guardians have their own minions, ranging from *he-uge* spiders to horned demons – all quite intelligent and all out to kill you.

You are equipped with ten star-shaped blades to lob at these foes. But when these are used up your ninja faces hand-to-hand combat, unless he can find more. (Other traditional *Gauntlet* goodies can be collected, too.)

Energy and life force must be watched closely; without these you suddenly become an ex-ninja (this ninja is no more . . . *(cut the parrot sketch jokes – ED)*). But if you're in difficulty you can call on Kwon for a quick top-up.

Though the maze is mainly in monochrome, the scenery has plenty of colour to liven up the display. This and the detailed and smoothly-animated characters add up to a highly attractive game.

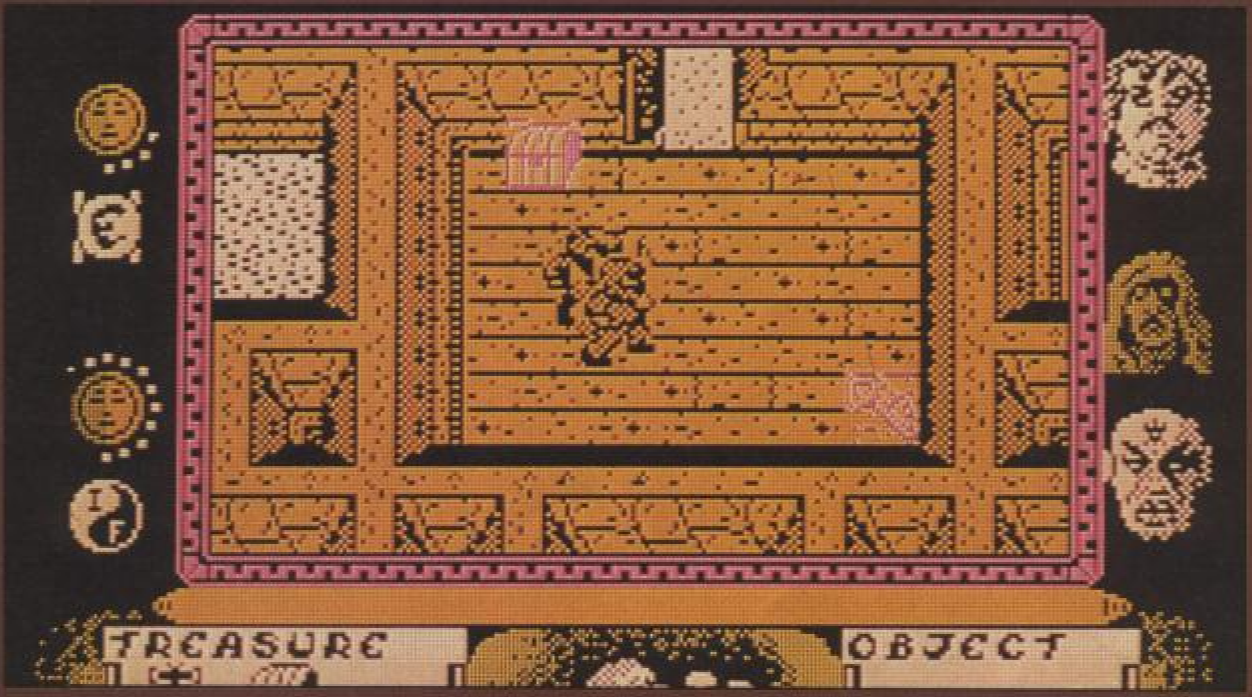
And the gameplay doesn't suffer from this indulgence in graphics – it succeeds as what it's designed to be: a fast, exciting but challenging quest.

To top it off, the sound FX and title tune are neat, making *Avenger* a pleasant addition to the range.

ROBIN ■ As a sequel to an enjoyable game, this was a disappointment. Most of the action is presented in black-and-white, though the animation more than makes up for that. Gameplay is enjoyable and can be addictive for a while.

But it still boils down to another *Gauntlet* game with few innovations. And probably the biggest disappointment is the lack of a two-player option, which after all is the highlight of any *Gauntlet* game.

▶ **Kwon with the wind in Gremlin Graphics's *Avenger***





You have only one life, which is represented by a health score. This goes down when you're wounded by the enemy and goes up when food and drink are collected. Scattered about each maze are objects which give limited help, such as increased fire power and invisibility.

To progress to the next level you have to find an exit – and if you're particularly proficient, you can buy *The Deeper Dungeons*, a 512-screen add-on to *Gauntlet*.

The biggest letdown in the Spectrum conversion of *Gauntlet* is the graphics, which are small and simple. And, unlike the arcade original, the Spectrum *Gauntlet* allows only two players. Still, the conversion retains all the playability and addictive qualities that made the original such a smash hit. The multiload system gets a bit annoying at times – but it's a small price to pay.

RICKY ■ Because *Gauntlet* is the official conversion, it includes all the best features, and it's no disappointment after the arcade game. However, I could only enjoy *Gauntlet* as a two-player game – on my own I found it didn't generate the same enthusiasm.

STORM
Mastertronic

ROBIN ■ Una Cum the wicked one has made off with fearless Storm's wife, the delectable Corrine. She's been locked up in Una's laboratory while he's off looking for a box called The Fear.

As soon as Storm heard of this, he set off to retrieve his sweetheart from the castle, stopping en route to enlist the help of Agravian The Undead (who only appears in two-player mode). To free Corrine they must collect three snake brooches.

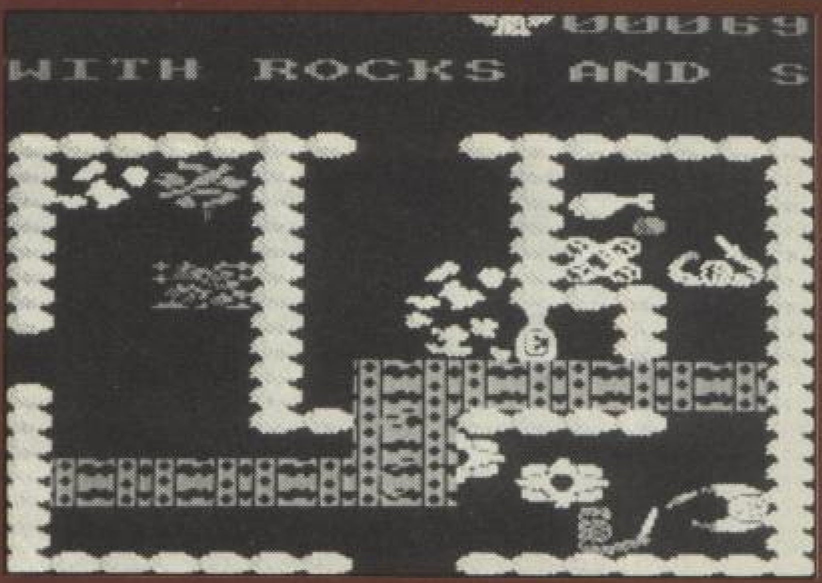
Storm was one of the first *Gauntlet* clones, and it has many *Gauntlet*esque features, such as keys to open locked doors and food to replenish energy.

The one distinguishing feature of *Storm* is the control method. Storm rotates either clockwise or anticlockwise, and another key is used to propel him forward. This method suits some of the 3-D isometric games, but I found it fiddly.

Graphically *Storm* is very boring; the graphics are big, but designed with little attention to detail. I found it immensely boring and not a patch on most of the other *Gauntlet* games. Even at its budget price, steer clear of this one.

RICKY ■ *Storm* was originally an Amstrad game – and it shows. The graphics are absurdly blocky, so movement is jerky. The control method is strange, because *Storm* could have been such a fast-moving game; 'Turn to the desired direction and move' just adds to the frustration, making it almost impossible to enjoy the game. Avoid.

▶ **'Turn to the desired direction and move': the wisdom of Confucius ONLY FROM Mastertronic in *Storm***



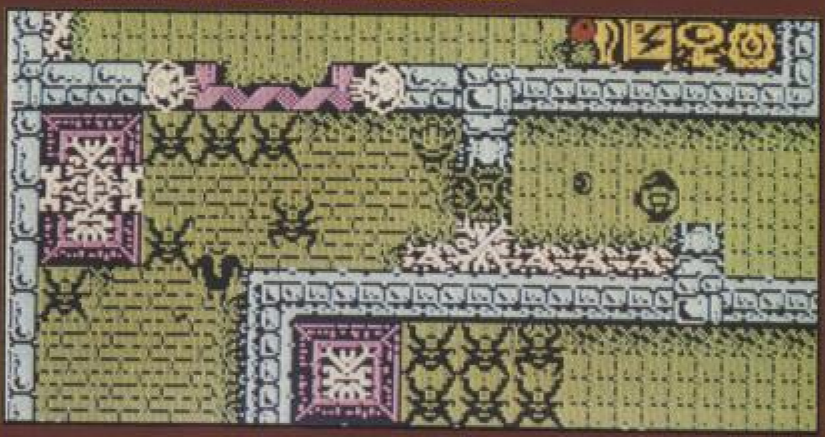
DYNAMIC DUNGEONS

DANDY
Electric Dreams

RICKY ■ Electric Dreams lost to US Gold in the battle for the official *Gauntlet* licence. So they decided to go one better and buy the rights to *Dandy* – the game which inspired *Gauntlet*.

Dandy goes down to the simplest elements of a *Gauntlet* game – the object for our two heroes, Thor and Sheba, is to penetrate deep within a series of dungeons, collecting as much treasure as humanly possible and avoiding the hordes of evil spiders.

► The grand*Dandy* of them all, from Electric Dreams



RANARAMA
Hewson

ROBIN ■ *Ranarama* is yet another Smashed game along the same lines as *Gauntlet*. In this game you have complete control over Mervyn, a sorcerer's apprentice, who happens to be in frog form at the start of the game (due to a few miscast spells).

Mervyn is trapped in a dungeon; to escape and return himself to his former glory, he must destroy 96 evil warlocks, 12 on each level. In some rooms there are strange symbols on the floor which, if Mervyn moves over them, can be used to weave spells, reveal maps or destroy the enemies in the same room.

The rooms vary; some are quite large, others are little more than tunnels. Each is shrouded in darkness till Mervyn enters it for the first time – then light floods in to reveal the contents of the room.

To kill the warlocks, Mervyn must find them and then move into the same space. This takes the player into a subgame, which features the letters R-A-N-A-R-A-M-A jumbled up. The player must sort them into order by taking a pair of letters at a time and exchanging the positions of the two letters – within a time limit. Losing the battle means losing spell power – or even death.

If you win, then the warlock leaves some magic runes, which must be collected quickly lest their power wane and disappear. The runes can be converted or exchanged for parts of spells or strength in battle.

There are four types of spell available, and each has eight levels of potency. As Mervyn progresses through the eight levels of the game, he meets more powerful adversaries and so needs an increased spell strength. Using spells saps energy, as does contact with evil Warlocks and their guards. Fortunately for Mervyn, he can increase his strength with energy crystals and by exchanging runes for power spells.

Ranarama is a novel variant on the *Gauntlet* theme, and arguably the best of the bunch. It seems to me a *better* game than *Gauntlet*.

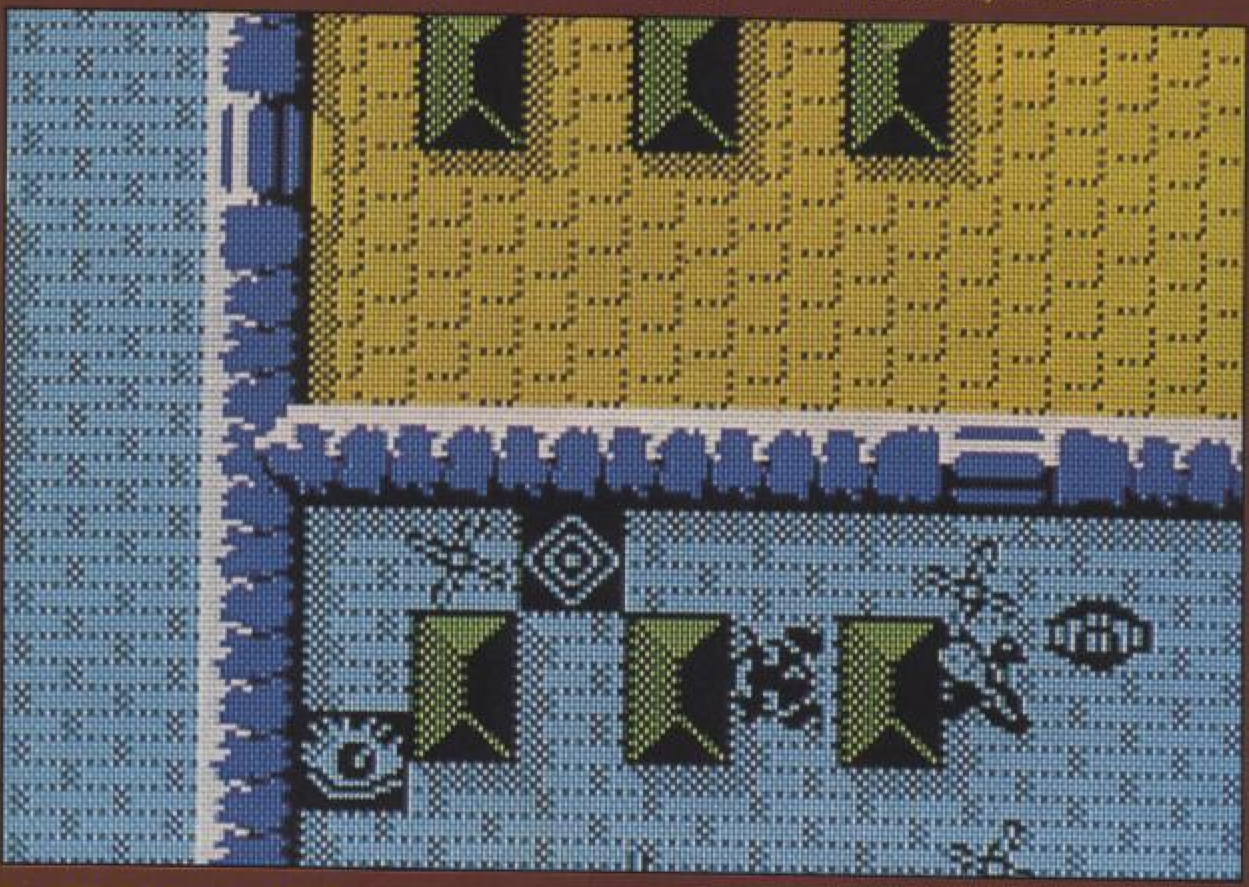


It's graphically good, and the animation of the small characters is acceptable. I particularly like the way the rooms don't appear onscreen till you enter them for the fist time; the subgame is also an interesting development, and gets quite frantic at times.

Ranarama is worth buying, even though it's a bit derivative of the arcade machine – it has better gameplay and more ingenuity than the other *Gauntlet* clones.

RICKY ■ I couldn't agree with Robin more – *Ranarama* probably tops the lot because it's such a *busy* game. It's not a straight copy, and goes beyond *Gauntlet* with rune-casting, spells and a host of other features. Its atmosphere conveys a true sense of adventuring, because the rooms aren't revealed till they're entered. If you haven't played *Ranarama* yet, check it out.

► Hey, this is no way to *Ranarama*! Whaddyathinklam, somekindofa frog?

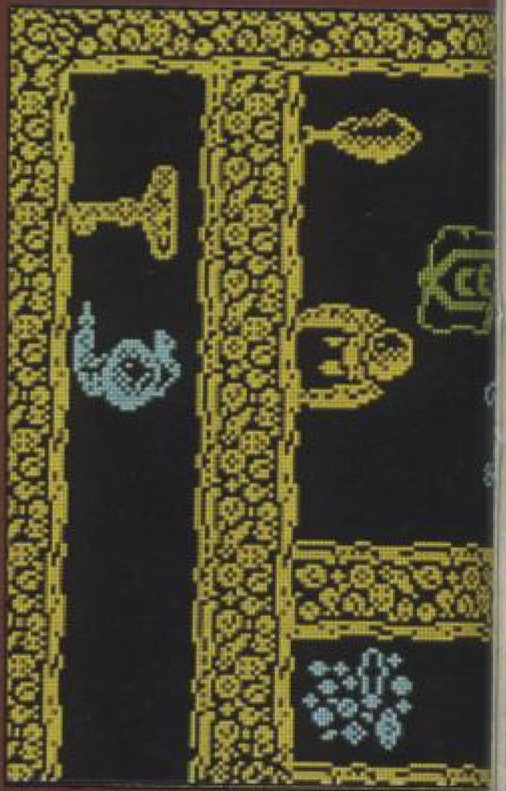


HOW TO BE A HERO
Mastertronic

ROBIN ■ *How To Be A Hero* comes in three distinct parts: Egyptian Tomb, Space Station and After The Holocaust.

In the Egyptian Tomb your hero has to escape after locking himself in, the silly fool – and the museum he works for wants 24 artefacts from this tomb. Of course you can concentrate on escaping, but it would look a bit cowardly if you returned empty-handed.

Once out of the tomb, being the trainee superhero that you are you miraculously appear on a spaceship where you are the sole survivor of some disaster. This ship has gone off course and is hurtling through space. For the more cowardly adventurers there's an escape craft; the brave can attempt to repair the doomed



To combat these dreaded foes, you can find spells which make your character so potent that he/she can rid the entire screen of adversaries – the 'smart bomb syndrome'.

Graphically, *Dandy* is remarkably colourful and moves well, though the action can slow down when a lot is happening onscreen. And *Dandy* may have a great deal of simple appeal – but I found it didn't hold my attention for as long as long as *Ranarama*, say, probably because of the little variation in gameplay.

CRASH's original ratings seem a bit over the top when you compare the game with today's *Gauntlets*, but do try to get a look at *Dandy*.

ROBIN ■ Colourwise *Dandy* is an excellent game – the graphics are well-defined, and the screen doesn't get cluttered up with nasty attribute problems. There are exciting one- and two-player options. Overall it's a good game.

spaceship.

In the final stage, you're an army officer in a mutant city and must find 24 pieces of a vital document. To return without them would mean a court martial. As in all the other levels there are nasties out to stop you – and your only defence is a super zap gun specially designed for heroes.

The graphics on *HTBAH* are big and bold, but the aliens flicker annoyingly. The gameplay is only average; though there are three distinct levels, the game is essentially the same in each.

I find *HTBAH* boring and repetitive as *Gauntlet* games go.

RICKY ■ Big, pretty and dull. The main problem is the oversized maze, which is too large for excitement. The decaying pineapples are quite amusing, but the novelty wears off quickly – like the rest of the game. *How To Be A Hero* is above the standard of *Storm*, but only marginally.

► **Mastertronic's** *How To Be A Hero:* **beautiful but dumb?**

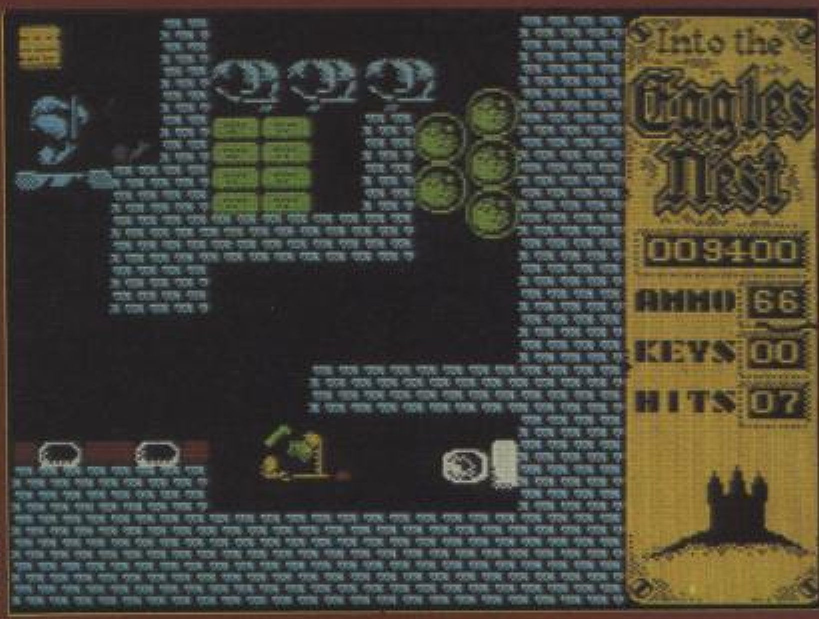


INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST
Pandora

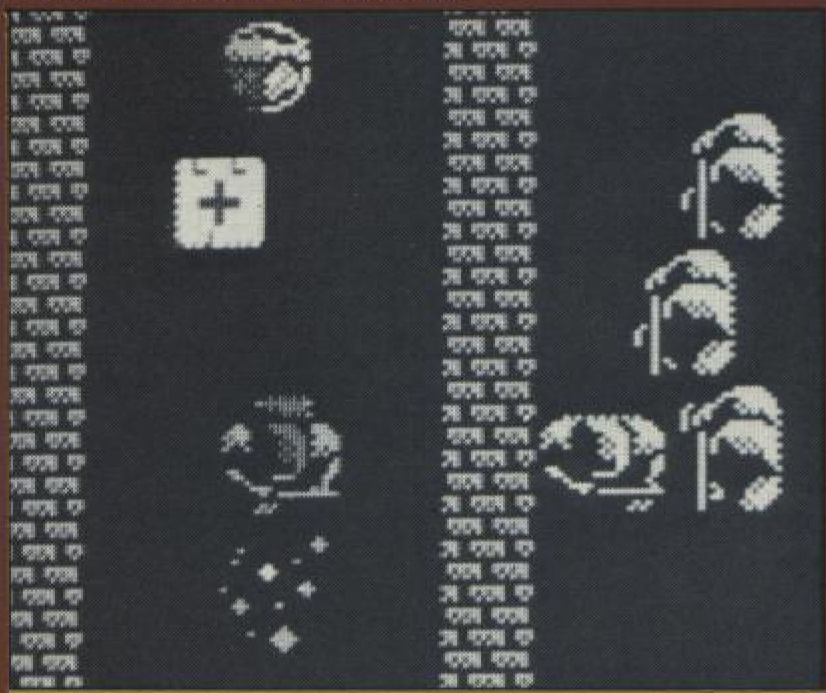
RICKY ■ For a first release, from Interceptor's offspring Pandora, this was pleasantly surprising. The main attraction is the graphics: large and very stylish, with the emphasis on the way light falls on the characters and their surroundings.

The Eagle's Nest itself is a huge fortress – you've been ordered to rescue captives held within its walls and then blow it to smithereens. But the enemy aren't going to let you just walk in and do the job – there are hordes of soldiers, all armed and all to be defeated.

The eponymous castle is divided into four levels and seen from overhead, in the familiar *Gauntlet* fashion. Each level is a maze of corridors and rooms, littered with ammunition (you can also find treasures to boost your score).



► **Opening Pandora's box:** *Into The Eagle's Nest*



Into The Eagle's Nest is the most graphically pleasing of all the clones, but when you're a bit fed up with looking at it the actual task can become tiresome, especially as you usually die rather quickly.

If you want a *Gauntlet* game that can be mapped easily, then *Into The Eagle's Nest* offers something, but maybe it's priced a bit high for what it is.

ROBIN ■ Writing this feature was the first chance I got to see *Into The Eagle's Nest*, and I was impressed. The graphics are very good, more spectacular than those in other games of this ilk. And gameplay can be fast and furious.

There's a strategy element involved in determining when you're going to collect supplies which are not replenished, such as a medical kit.

The only real drawback of *Into The Eagle's Nest* is that it grows monotonous. If this were a budget game it would be worth buying – but you can buy a better *Gauntlet*-type game for this money.

GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	PRICE	THE REVIEW	OVERALL THEN	OVERALL NOW
Gauntlet	US Gold	£7.95	37 (February 1987) page 16	92%	89%
Druid	Firebird	£7.95	35 (December 1986) page 146	90%	88%
Ranarama	Hewson	£7.95	38 (March 1987) page 108	90%	92%
Into The Eagle's Nest	Pandora	£8.95	39 (April 1987) page 109	82%	70%
How To Be A Hero	Mastertronic	£2.99	40 (May 1987) page 111	70%	56%
Storm	Mastertronic	£1.99	34 (November 1986) page 20	44%	39%
Avenger	Gremlin	£9.95	36 (January 1987) page 173	85%	85%
Dandy	Electric Dreams	£7.95	35 (December 1986) page 145	84%	72%

Crash Competition

Win a VIP day out at the PCW Show Pump Action Water Rifles and copies of EXOLON

in our CRASH/HEWSON EXOLONT Competition



To celebrate the blasting success of **Hewson**'s latest CRASH Smash, ***Exolon*** I was elected to think of a suitable competition prize. Since the particular day this task befell me had been one of utter frustration caused by the antics of the CRASH reviewing chimps, and I felt like shooting the lot of them, I suggested to the lovely Julia at Hewson that she might send me some guns – and she did; four UZI UZ/5 repeat pump-action water guns capable of firing a pressurised jet up to 30 feet (no mean feat), or ten metres for the metrically-minded.

As you can see in the pictures the CRASH lads got a bit carried away, running around the park squirting the Ludlow holiday-makers screaming, 'Remember the Alamo!' (which of course none of them do).

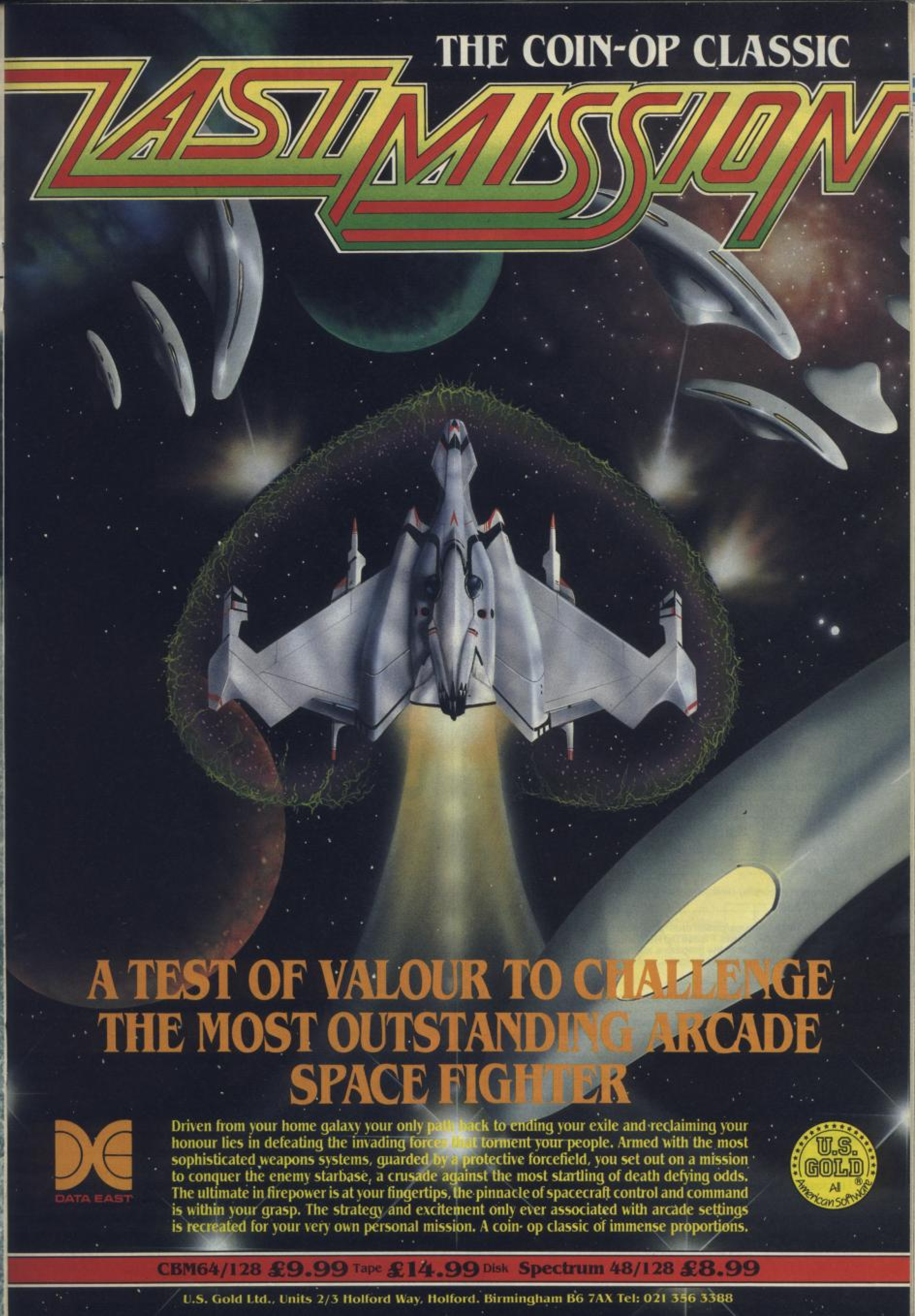
Anyway, looking at the pictures afterwards, the one of young Mike 'Skippy' Dunn, ambushed and forced to his knees, inspired me to think of some lovely captions – I wonder whether you can think of some better ones than I have? If you can, then you might get to own one of the pump-action water guns, or win a copy of ***Exolon***.

But the person with the very best caption in my humble opinion, will win a fabulous VIP day out with Hewson's Julia Coombs at the Olympia PCW Show (between 25 - 27 September). There'll be Hewson and CRASH goody bags, as well as a tour around the show. On top of that the winner will receive one of the water guns and a copy of ***Exolon***. Three runners up each get a water gun and a copy of the game, and a further 20 runners up receive a copy of ***Exolon***.

Take a close look at the main photograph, think up a suitable caption (of no more than 20 words) and send it in on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to **EXOLONT COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than 27 August. Don't forget your name, address and phone number (so Julia can phone you to make the arrangements)!

The Comps Minion would like to say 'Naa boo!' to Mark Kendrick from 'art' who sulked *all day* after being squirted. Thank you.

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BACK NUMBERS

Don't miss out!

1985

17 JUN Denton Designs • Sinclair Story 3 • Maps: Knight Lore, Underwurlde • Leonardo Graphics • Datel sound sampler • Artist: David Thorpe
18 JUL Gremlin Graphics profile • Artist: Bob Wakelin • Map: Gyron Atrium
19 AUG CRL Profile • Oliposter • Round Up of BASIC compilers • Artist: Rich Shenfield • Maps: Dynamite Dan, Shadowfire
20 SEP Electronic Pencil Company Profile • Maps: Alien 8, Dun Darach
21 OCT Holografix profile • Holograms • Map: Nodes of Yesod • Platinum Productions profile
22 NOV Fanzine File • Microdrive tips • Artist: Susan Rowe • Fantasy Gamebooks
23 DEC Melbourne House • Computer graphics • Artist: Dave Beeson
XMAS 1985/6 Artist: Oliver Frey • Gargoyle Games profile • Lloyd's Lookback • Hewson profile

1986

25 FEB Durell profile • Microsphere • FORTH and extensions to ZX BASIC
26 MAR St Bride's Profile • Spectrum 128 • Micronet 800 • Multiface One
27 APR Playing Tips Supplement • Mel Croucher • Imagine profile • PBM convention
28 MAY Fanzines • Martech profile • Composite Video Interface • SpecDrum
29 JUN 1st PBM Mailbox • Homegrown software • Realtime profile • Maps: Cylu, Sir Fred, Saboteur, Tantalus
30 JUL Birth of a game • Laser Genius • Maps: Tantalus, Movie
31 AUG Software Projects • Wordprocessing • Maps: Pentagram, Heavy on the Magick
32 SEP Programmer: Dave Perry • GAC • Maps: Core, Ghosts'n'Goblins, Bobby Bearing • Echo Synthesizer
33 OCT Programmers: Jon Ritman, Costa Panayi • Maps: Dan Dare, Cauldron II • SpecDrumming
34 NOV Programmer: Don Priestley • Genesis Update • Maps: Dynamite Dan II, Equinox, Universal Hero • Music Machine
35 DEC Designer: Dan Malone • Computer Advertising • Maps: Glider Rider, Thrust, Lightforce • Midi
XMAS 86/7 Lloyd's Lookback • Spectrum Music • Maps: Scooby Doo, Heartland, Druid

1987

37 FEB John Richardson: Jetman • CRASH Reviewers revealed • Match day Challenge • Maps: Fairlight II, Firelord, Avenger, Dandy
38 MAR Fanzines • Designer: Bernie Drummond • Maps: Cobra, Impossaball, Uridium • Midi
39 APR Arcades Update • The Z88 • Programmer: Steve Taylor • Maps: Nosferatu, Double Take, Future Knight, Feud
40 MAY Terminal Man returns • Playing Tips Supplement • Maps: Short Circuit, Antiriad, Con-Quest, Eagle's Nest, Sceptre of Bagdad, Dragon's Lair II, Thrust II, Fat Worm, Tarzan, Aliens
41 JUN Programmer; Mike Singleton • Industry today • Adventure Trail Supplement • Maps: Saboteur II, Head Over Heels • Multi-Trackers • 128 Bugs
42 JUL 16-page *Oink!* pull-out • *Living Daylights* film FX • programmer: Pete Cooke • maps: *Auf Wiedersehen Monty, Hydrofool, Rasterscan*

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WHY DON'T YOU COME IN FOR
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This month the enigmatic Denise has excelled herself! She's teamed up with the boys at Elite to bring you one of the most up-to-date offers ever. On 20 July Elite released their new games pack *Trio* – it receives 70% in this issue. Now you can get *Trio* free when you subscribe – or, if you're already a subscriber, for just £4.95. And if you don't fancy *Trio* there are three other games to choose from, all big Elite sellers.

We don't need to say any more about CRASH – just look at this issue. And as the months go by CRASH is getting bigger and brighter, with a whole load of special features to make sure you get the most out of Spectrum gaming.

FOR EXISTING SUBSCRIBERS

If you already have a CRASH, sub don't feel left out – by the miracle of the mail-order service, you can still buy the games at reduced prices when you quote your subscription number. *Trio* and *Six Pak* are available at £4.95 each and *Paperboy* and the *Bombjack* duo are £3.95 each.

If your sub is running out and you'd like to take advantage of the free offer, you can renew it. Quote your subscriber number and indicate in the appropriate box which issue you would like the extended subscription to run from. Oh, and don't forget to enclose a £15 cheque or postal order.

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

Guru Denise, the subscription queen, cordially invites Crash readers to subscribe to the world's leading Spectrum magazine for one year of advanced computer entertainment. During the year of their subscription, subscribers are entitled to 50p off all games ordered from Aunt Aggie in the Mail Order Emporium – and they can take advantage of future subscription offers. RSVP.

Love
Denise Roberts

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FAB OFFER FREE GAMES



BOMBJACK & BOMBJACK II

Capcom's *Bombjack* duo are a respected pair. The original received a CRASH Smash at 92% last year while its sequel won 71% this April. Essentially they're platform games for superheroes with a boing in their step. Bound around the many levels collecting treasure and defusing bombs!

TRIO

Three new games for the price of none! Elite's new *Trio* pack gives you three chances to bust your joystick. There's *Airwolf II*, the sequel to the Smashed original. From a Taito licence comes *Great Gurianos*, a beat-'em-up with huge graphics. And there's also *3DC*, an isometric perspective game set in the depths of the murky ocean. Read the full review on page 18 of this CRASH!

PAPER BOY

The official Capcom conversion won acclaim with an excellent rating of 88%. Since then it's been riding high in the CRASH popularity charts every month. Steer your paperboy through the mean streets and make sure the papers get delivered to the right houses – and watch out for cars, bikers, runaway tyres and the occasional C5 that hurtles down the course.

SIX PAK

By some freak of nature the *Six Pak* contains seven games! But there's nothing to complain about when you can get hold of a compilation with such a superb collection of software – including two Smashes! There's (take a deep breath) *Scooby Doo* (91%), *Fighting Warrior* (73%), *1942* (63%), *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* (89%), *Jet Set Willy II* (61%), *Split Personalities* (90%) and *Duet* – previously unreleased, it's the unofficial and fabled *Commando '86*!

DEAR GURU DENISE

You do have a way with words – not to mention special offers. How can I resist whatever it is I can't resist? Well, I can't, can I? That's enough unanswerable questions (or is it?) – I'm giving in and enclose my cheque/postal order for £15 (£22 outside mainland UK) made out to **NEWSFIELD LTD**, for 12 issues of CRASH, and await the free game I've ticked.

(I know that if I'm already a subscriber I can't get a free game – but I just might buy one of the Elite hits from CRASH Mail Order at a reduced price!)

Please tick the appropriate box:

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I'D LIKE SOME FREE ELITE SOFTWARE TOO (tick one):

☐ *Trio*

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☐ *Paper Boy*

☐ *Bombjack & Bombjack II*

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FANZINE FILE!

By ROBIN CANDY and BARNABY PAGE

BIRMINGHAM
TWO SURVIVORS?

Journal and **Wizz**, both previewed in the last FANZINE FILE (Issue 38, March), are products of the same Birmingham minds: Perry Stephen Buck (Editor of *Journal*, contributor to *Wizz*) and Simon Jones (Editor of *Wizz* and contributor to *Journal*).

Journal, which has recently obtained sponsorship from Barclays Bank, is printed by litho offset with an impressive photocopied cover by Lhea Barrett, while all of *Wizz* is photocopied. Both are A4 (like CRASH).

The contents are similar, too: such favourites as letters pages, lots of reviews, previews and film reviews.

But both have original features. *Journal* has PBM and heavy-metal columns, and a free poster promised for the current issue (4), while *Wizz* has its own comic-strip character, Megga Martin.

One of the biggest problems with fanzines is picture reproduction – all too often, screen shots of games fade into a black mass. But *Wizz* has clear pictures, though it's photocopied. *Journal*'s illustration consists mostly of line drawings, much easier to reproduce cleanly.



► **Publishing software and mags: Perry Buck of *Journal* (left) and Simon Jones of *Wizz*, both from Birmingham**

The layout of both is simple and neat, with *Wizz* edging slightly ahead – though, like many fanzines, it is a touch derivative of CRASH (well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery).

These are two of the best fanzines we've read, though it seems half of them is devoted to plugging the editors' software labels: Perry Buck's Spotlight Games and Simon Jones's Mediandroid. CRASH, of course, would never mention a software house gratuitously. Thalamus.

Wizz recently went down from 40 pages at 55p to 24 pages at 30p – at the higher price it was 'contending too much with mags such as CRASH', according to Editor Jones. It's available from Simon Jones at *285 Melchett Road, Birmingham Factory Centre, Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 3HN.*

Subscriptions in the UK are £7 for 12 issues and £4 for six issues (write to *Wizz* for overseas rates); cheques should be payable to The Megga Enterprise Group.

Journal, which costs 50p an issue, is available from **Perry Buck**, *19 Hawkesley End, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 9SQ*. Subscriptions are £4.50 for six months, £9.50 for 12 months, including p&p. Payment for single copies should be sent with a 24p stamp; cheques and POs should be made payable to The Spotlight Group.

Readers and software houses are wary of fanzines. They're afraid that the latest homegrown CRASH asking for review copies doesn't actually exist, or that the fanzine they've just subscribed to will fizzle out after a couple of issues.

(Buy 'em by all means – but don't send off pounds and pounds and pounds till the fanzine is established, many months old.)

So perhaps we need fewer, better, more regular fanzines, as Jeffrey Davy of *The Bug* argues in this month's NEWS INPUT feature (news starts on page 10). That article looks at how a backroom rag can become the software trade's biggest controversy since, oh, last week.

But don't forget: fanzines are about writing and designing as much as reading. And while we're highlighting the better-written, better-looking jobs (incidentally, nearly all fanzines look better than they read . . .), it's good that so many thin, handwritten ventures still turn up at the Towers. Great oaks from little Spectrums, etc.

And competition is healthy. True, that *is* what they all say . . .

DOVER
BLACK BLOBS – LATEST REPORT

Produced on A4 paper with a coloured cover, the monthly **Spectacle** (from the port of Dover in Kent) is one of the most attractive fanzines we've seen – and moving spirit Paul Bowman was already working on the seventh issue when we wrote this in late June.

Screen reproduction is reasonable, with only a few photographs appearing as black blobs. The layout of the reviews is very professional and interesting.

But apart from the cover there's little illustration, which leaves some pages looking a bit blank.

Reviews make up the bulk of the magazine – both full-page reviews of new releases and minireviews of 'oldies' (certainly a good idea).

The main reviews are marked on a scale from 1 to 10 in four of the usual categories – Graphics, Sound, Playability and Value – with an Overall mark at the end.

But the comments aren't detailed enough, and the ratings, given as bar charts, are difficult to decipher.

Spectacle also includes tips, cartoons, competitions and previews – and goes beyond the Spectrum to feature video and records, though the issue we saw stuck to track listings rather than criticism.

Single copies cost 50p plus a stamp, and a year's subscription costs £5. Write to Subscription Offer, *Spectacle* Magazine, *20 Monins Road, Dover, Kent CT17 9NX.*





SALTBURN

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

Sinclair And Commodore Monitor was featured in the last FANZINE FILE when it made the great leap from handwriting to typewriting. Since then it's been expanded and is now called **J.S.**. It's based in Saltburn, on England's north-east coast.

Former Editor Huw Lippiatt did away with the all-computer format in favour of a much more general magazine, and then relinquished the hot seat to Jad Smith.

The contents page makes *J.S.* look like a good, wide-ranging mag, but really sections like the pop slot and Cookery Course are excuses for schoolboy humour which isn't amusing or interesting.

The magazine seems to be a risible rip-off of *Viz* comic, which is funny because it's so outrageously tacky – but weak imitations don't work. *J.S.* would be better if the writers paid more attention to the readers.

But the computer section stands out, written with much more conviction than the rest – though it would be nice if somebody proofread the articles, or even used a dictionary.

The photocopying is reasonably clear, but once again photo reproduction is poor. The pages are enlivened by cartoons which pop up everywhere.

J.S. is available at 40p a copy from *Glenholme, Albion Terrace, Saltburn, Cleveland TS12 1LT.*



COLCHESTER

FORWARD THRUST

IMPACT certainly lives up to its name – and it's our favourite fanzine this month. Run by Mat Johnston, Matt Clayton and Kirk Weddell, it's produced to an astoundingly high standard with some excellent artwork.

The screen shots have lost some detail, but the illustrations – cartoons and little symbols for the ratings – more than make up for that. There's a hard-hitting logo, too: rough brick walls, nails and shreds of paper spelling the fanzine's title.

It seems to be typed on an ordinary typewriter, so there are no special typefaces, but it's clear enough.

Games are marked out of 100 in seven categories – Graphics, Animation, Sound, Content, Addictive Qualities, Presentation and Value For Money – and given an overall rating too. Adventures have Vocabulary and Atmosphere marks too.

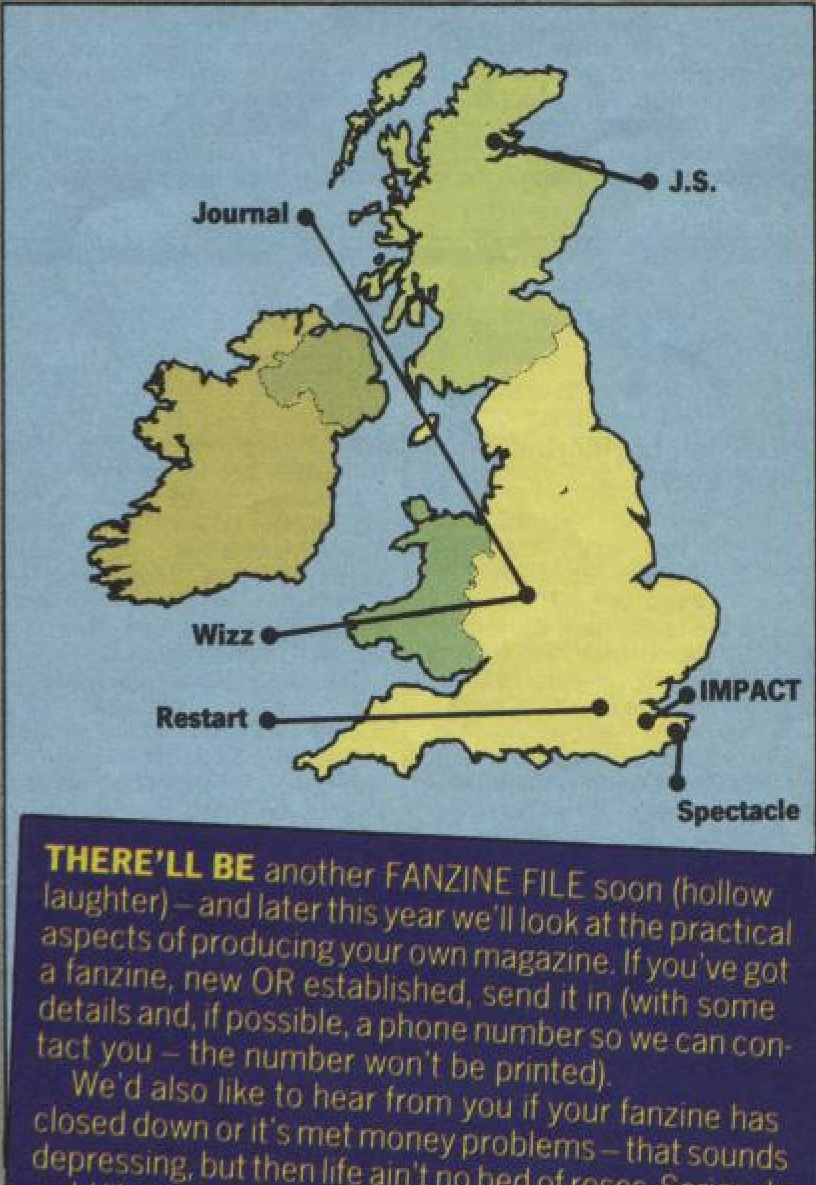
The ratings system is explained on a cleverly devised pull-out page which you can consult while going through the magazine.

Good games are given a Blaster, and the very best are awarded the Master Blaster accolade!

IMPACT, which sells about 150 copies each issue, also has competitions, arcade features, tips, cartoon strips and reviews of old favourites (the Reverse Thrust section).

It's all very intelligently done; the features are well-written as fanzines go, and there's even an apology to software companies for not reviewing everything. And 34 pages of A4 at 40p an issue represents excellent value for money. This fanzine deserves to survive.

IMPACT has been off the scene awhile – 'exams', as they say in Fleet Street – but Issue 3 should be out this summer. It's available from *IMPACT* Publications, *94 Rainsborowe Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7JS*. Send 40p and a stamp for the latest issue.



THERE'LL BE another FANZINE FILE soon (hollow laughter) – and later this year we'll look at the practical aspects of producing your own magazine. If you've got a fanzine, new OR established, send it in (with some details and, if possible, a phone number so we can contact you – the number won't be printed).

We'd also like to hear from you if your fanzine has closed down or it's met money problems – that sounds depressing, but then life ain't no bed of roses. Seriously, we'd like to get the inside story on the hassles of fanzining. Absolute confidentiality assured, as in all the best scandals.

Write to:

Fanzines, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB

CUDHAM

BUT WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET

The doodled cover of **Restart** doesn't promise much, but inside the layout is excellent – and consistent, which makes the magazine look professional.

This fanzine's reviews all follow the same format: half-page affairs with a picture and a ratings box (Graphics, Playability, Value, Sound, Overall). Most of the screen shots have been reproduced quite well.

Restart is basically a review magazine, with a brief tips page and the odd feature. But right at the end of the mag is a page (Beyond The Speccy) dedicated to film, video and books reviews. And *Restart*, on just its second issue, plans to expand with a letters page.

Issue Two costs 20p plus a stamp, and it's available from *40 Downe Avenue, Cudham, Kent TN14 7QX*.

By the way, would *Restart*'s editor(s) please let us know who he/she/they is/are, sometime/soon?

FRNTLINE

with Philippa Irving



MURDER? SHE ASKED

A perennial question of wargaming is whether it's morally justifiable to make a game out of the mass destruction of human life. We first have to ask whether there can be an absolute objection – 'wargames are wrong, judged by an external standard' – or whether it's a matter of individual feelings.

Curiously, it's easier to ignore the moral question altogether if we accept that wargames could be absolutely wrong. All wargames, from Ancient Rome to nuclear war, would be equally wrong because they make a game out of people killing each other. One could then choose to say that if all wargames are equally bad, modern settings are no more offensive than games which depict ancient wars. But people are generally reluctant to admit the logic of this, in their hearts anyway.

The conspicuous thing about most historical wargames is that they don't take sides, or at least not within the game itself. Many offer a chance to play either side of the fence, and those which don't usually don't because of memory restrictions.

Wargames which do take a position are normally the ones which raise objections, and this is fair enough, particularly when the war in question still effects us.

It wouldn't matter much if a game condoned the Romans in their war with the Carthaginians, but when American software houses produce propaganda about Vietnam it's time to feel uneasy. Politically slanted wargames represent one side as morally justified; unbiased wargames allow the player to make his own judgment.

DARK EMPIRE

Producer: **Lothlorien**
Price: **£9.95**

Many letters in FRONTLINE FORUM express an interest in fantasy wargames. These can bridge the reality gap, the feeling of dissociation from the subject matter which can alienate strategy gamers from the historical setting of a real war.

And while a real war can never fit into the artificial constraints of a game, no matter how clever the system is, a fantasy war can be tailor-made for computer-gaming. So it can be a slicker piece of software.

Dark Empire certainly is. Its scenario doesn't make many concessions to realism, even fantasy realism. It's set long, long ago, on a planet far, far away . . . where there is a world which resembles a conglomeration of modern paranoid fears about totalitarian regimes.

The people of this planet think they're leading normal lives. The outside universe certainly thinks all is well there. But the population is controlled and manipulated by an 'evil alien force', the Dark Empire – and so successfully that the oppressed multitude couldn't communicate with the outside to ask for help, even if they were aware they needed it.

Despite this, for reasons not explored by Lothlorien, the Deep Space Authorities got to hear about it and dispatched a Liberation Task Force, presumably to impose their own benign rule on the planet.

The action takes place across the planet's continents and oceans. As usual in long-range wargaming, single units represent armies or fleets; and battles, instead of being played out in tactical detail, are fought on contact with enemy units.

There are two maps. One gives a large-scale overview of land masses, cities and deployment of units. The other zooms in closer. The landscape is totally blank, so terrain doesn't enter into *Dark Empire*; the style and speed of the gameplay would make such a refinement cumbersome anyway.

The presentation is immaculate. The front end of the game allows the player to load a previously-saved game or create a new one. If you choose the latter option, the program leaves you waiting for minutes while it randomly generates a new set of continents. To reassure the impatient that there's still someone there, the game counts to itself. Sometimes the process is quite quick, and it only gets up to 300. Sometimes it goes above 1,000. I have no idea why. But this is certainly one way of creating suspense.

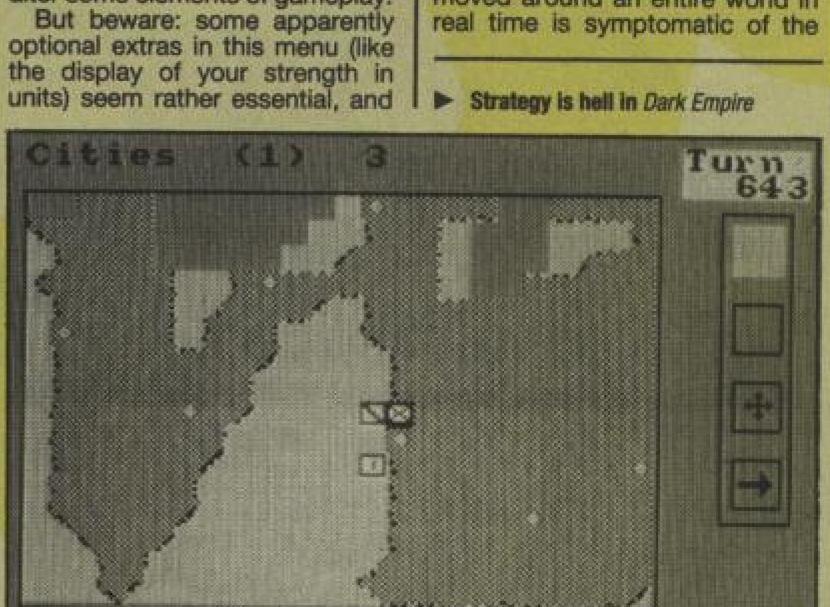
Pressing a key brings up a detailed map with beautifully-designed counters. The first thing to do is enter the break-in menu, which has an impressive range of options. As usual you can redefine the control keys, and you can also change the onscreen colours and alter some elements of gameplay.

But beware: some apparently optional extras in this menu (like the display of your strength in units) seem rather essential, and you might find yourself playing a shorn version of the game without realising it.

And it's odd that you have to be into the game itself before you can start altering these parameters; still, you can juggle things about easily at any point.

The break-in menu also acts as a kind of unofficial pause mode, for *Dark Empire* is played in real time. (The absurdity of imagining that armies and fleets can be moved around an entire world in real time is symptomatic of the

► **Strategy is hell in** *Dark Empire*



game's artificiality.)

The object is simply to capture cities. Each continent is peppered with cities, some of them ports, and all are named; but this provides temporary atmosphere only. Because of the random regeneration of the world at the start of each game there's no point in mapping.

Discovering the map is part of the gameplay, in fact; you start out in possession of a single city, one army and a transport fleet, and can see only a tiny fragment of the surrounding land and sea. Moving units out into the unknown lights up the darkness, revealing new land masses, cities, and eventually enemy units.

When a city is under the player's control, it can join his war effort. Inland cities manufacture new army units, and ports can turn out naval units. There are no resource points to worry about, but it takes cities a while to round up an army or turn out a fleet – and time is the currency in this game. At the side of the map a counter ticks away the seconds, so nimbleness in manipulating the cumbersome movement system is important.

The units are controlled by icons. You can set an army trundling off in a specific direction, or tell it to make for a particular point. But the routine isn't intelligent enough to allow for corners and other obstructions, so guiding the units around the contours of the continents can become a wearisome catch-it-if-you-can. And of course you can only deal with one unit at a time, so when the game really gets under way there can be over 50 units doing nothing in the meantime.

Though most of the important business takes place on land, there's only one type of land unit. In contrast there are five different naval units, including submarines, destroyers, and transports for ferrying army units. The transports have a well-defined function, and can carry up to three army units. But though there are probably interesting parameters at work under the surface, it's difficult to see how attacking with one kind of ship or another makes much difference.

And because there are virtually no statistics attached to the units – just a lame indicator of strength – there's no scope for intelligent decision-making. To capture cities, you have to throw one army unit after another upon them, in single file, till they fall.

It seems complicating factors like statistics have been excluded to keep the gameplay fast and simple, but we're left with a piece of software which looks more like a conventional cardboard-counters boardgame than anything I've seen recently – and yet plays nothing like it.

After taking over a few continents unopposed, you meet the enemy. Then the game begins to degenerate into unplayability – there's simply too much going on at once for the two-handed, single-brained player to cope with.

You can easily capture 25 cities or so before you meet the enemy, and if you set those cities on continuous production (from the break-in menu) they'll happily churn out more units than you could ever get to the front line.

But because the ships are so difficult to manoeuvre, the player is likely to find himself engaged in a war of attrition – the attrition of his nerves.

And that's the fundamental flaw of a game which looks very attractive at first. Even at the slowest speed (there are three to choose from) it's impossible to maintain more than superficial control. The graphic design is exemplary – smooth scrolling, nice-looking units and easily-accessed options. But the real-time element defeats the purpose, and though it's addictive at first, disillusionment and nervous tension soon take over.

There are some odd bugs, too. For instance, the instructions mention aircraft and aircraft carriers, which don't appear in the game. *Dark Empire* is a slick piece of programming, but maybe it wasn't properly playtested.

This is too much of a hybrid game – interesting and impressive in some respects, but ultimately too unwieldy to be entertaining.

PRESENTATION 90%
A wide range of options always available, professional appearance, and even some decent scrolling!

GRAPHICS 85%
More wargames should look like this – the unit 'counters' are beautiful

RULES 55%
Just the back of the inlay

PLAYABILITY 49%
At first it's addictive, but after a while the game gets out of control

OVERALL 60%
Initially exciting, but fundamentally flawed

APOCALYPSE

Producer: **Infogrames**
Price: **£9.95**

Apocalypse seems to have a worthy pedigree – according to the instruction manual, it first appeared in 1983 on the Red Shift label. It's quite difficult for me to give a fair judgment of this one, because it's a two-player game only.

The full title is *Apocalypse – The Game Of Nuclear Devastation*, but the concept is more abstract than the specific settings suggest. The main program is a framework for four maps on different scales: Europe, the Caribbean, Britain and London. There are four scenarios of this kind, and the rulebook promises an expansion set with 'star systems' and 'Nether Earth'.

But there's little variety in the gameplay. On the European map you can move across entire countries and capture capital cities, the British map scales things down and lets you fight for the privilege of owning Liverpool, and the London map gives you the chance to take over Wimbledon and Games Workshop!

Essentially, the players form from two to four empires, which can be given their own names; each empire then attempts to bring the whole map under its control, whether that's all of Europe or just London. The empire centres – cities and important districts – are distributed equally among the empires at the start of the game. The player can choose his own, or let the computer allocate them randomly.

Each location has a revenue value, and the total revenue value of each empire's territory represents how much the player can spend on divisions, warships and nukes each turn.

The turn system is quite complex. The game gets under way with a deployment phase, where the players buy forces and position them around their empires. The phase which follows allows four subtly different methods of movement; irritatingly, forces can go only one square at a time, and nuclear missiles, once deployed, can't be moved at all.

Units are not represented in the traditional pictorial fashion. Instead, the empire which controls each location square leaves its own symbol in the square, and the forces deployed there are indicated in a businesslike way by numbers. This does nothing for atmosphere, but it stops the map getting cluttered.

There are really two maps – an overview to move the cursor about, and a scrolling close-up in a small window where you can examine each location. This works well, though it looks dated.

Combat occurs when one empire tries to occupy another's territory in the movement phase. This is only allowed if the attacker mobilises enough divisions, so kamikaze attacks aren't possible! There are different types of attack, and it seems the success of an attack depends largely on how much defence the opponent offers.

The genocidal player can choose not to bother with this sort of thing and launch a nuke instead. Predictably, this causes widespread devastation, indiscriminately destroys forces in the locations surrounding the target, and permanently reduces the revenue value of the affected area.

The instructions warn against nuking, but the advice isn't so sharply brought to life in *Apocalypse* as in, for instance, *Theatre Europe*. There's no instant overretaliation from the computer, merely the possibility of annoying your human opponent.

Apocalypse is an odd blend of realism and fantasy. For a start, you're required to choose your millennium. You pluck a date out of thin air – and of course it bears no resemblance to real history and makes no difference to the game.

If you let the computer select empire centres for you, the result is an impossible intermingling of power bases which, despite the realistic maps, makes the game look abstract from the start. *Apocalypse* lacks atmosphere because of this conspicuous 'gamishness'.

But *Apocalypse* has some meat. Though the scenarios are really only different maps, they add the imaginative scope which many games lack. And the very fact that *Apocalypse* has been designed for expansion is impressive, though the necessity of having at least two players limits its appeal. It looks slightly old-fashioned, but it's well enough programmed (don't press BREAK, though!).

There's no point giving ratings to a computer game which doesn't function like other computer games, but I'd recommend *Apocalypse* as a good buy to those who are certain they'll have someone else to play it with.

► **Aggressive empire-building in Infogrames's *Apocalypse***



►

FRONTLINE



FORUM

RATIONS FOR RATIONALITY

Dear Philippa
Your perseverance in trying to define strategy games gives me food for thought. Most board wargamers are interested in strategy games as well – that is, strategy games that are not wargames, or strategy games that do not require boards. I would contend, therefore, that the common denominator of these types of games is the strategy element, and so a blanket term that would cover them all is 'strategy games'.

Strategy involves the formulation of a plan in an effort to achieve a specific goal. One of the most enjoyable aspects of wargaming is that this plan must be continually updated in response to the opponent's moves. Now if your opponent is unintelligent, takes aeons, and refuses to make the coffee when it is his turn, you wouldn't find it enjoyable to play him/her.

This is why playing against computer opposition is so poor – the game designers realise you'll easily outthink the program and they compensate by giving the computer vastly stronger forces, better positions etc.

Strategy games also involve a series of trade-offs. You don't have the resources to be strong everywhere, so you must decide where to be strong and where to be weak. This is the element of decision-making. In games there are big decisions ('shall I invade Poland?') and little decisions ('shall I make this unimportant attack with aircraft, or without?'). There are policy decisions – some are major ('I won't use my helicopter units till later on, in an effort to preserve them for the break-out'), and some are minor ('I'll always leave a unit in my capital, just in case!'). There are also tactical decisions, and subtle questions of 'balance' – this is an abstract concept which separates the wheat from the chaff.

A strategy game must also have a rigid set of rules; they cannot be open-ended, and there must be a clearly-defined set of objectives. The best strategy games have a number of victory conditions and players can choose their goal in line with their strengths and weaknesses.

There must also be an element of conflict. Who wants to play a space exploration and colonisation game, for example, where all the contacted races are friendly and extend warm invitations to exploit their resources?

The next category is the one where computer games pale into insignificance compared to some boardgames and wargames. A good strategy game should have a feel for its subject. Napoleon should be really hesitant about committing the Old Guard to attack, because any minor setback would have drastic repercussions on the whole army. This feel cannot be injected by a sledgehammer rule like 'if the Old Guard retreat all army morale falls by 50% therefore the game ends'. That would reduce the complex interactions of units in combat to a clinical level – the end result may be approximately right, but the atmosphere is lost in the process.

Using the criteria above, it is possible to reject some games which are not strategy games. *The Great Space Race* was mentioned in your article as being strategic because it required decision-making. It could be argued that this game, like many adventure games, does not meet this criterion.

Decision-making implies that there must be a choice of options. In games these must be real options. If a message comes up on the screen 'You are in the blasted forest, do you want to go east or west?' this is not a real choice. There is no reason why you should go one way rather than the other – but there must be reasons other than whim.

On the other hand, the choice must be a balanced one. If you are told 'you can put your head in the fire if you want to', no-one who is sane would regard that as a balanced choice. *The Great Space Race* falls down because of the meaningless nature of the game.

Pat McCarthy, Bootle

What you identify, very astutely, are the essential ingredients of a GOOD strategy game. It seems, though, that most strategy games on the market miss out at least one of your criteria. What makes The Great Space Race *amusingly awful is that it misses out all of them! Anyway, Pat, you win this month's £20 worth of software . . .*

PI

THE CRASH STRATEGY CHART!

Here it is folks, the chart you've been waiting for (your chance to engage in some strategic voting). Let us know your favourite five strategy programs, and enter a draw for £20's worth of software and a fabulous CRASH T-Shirt. Five runners-up will also receive a T-Shirt, so post those coupons today.

The following are my five favourite strategy games in order of choice . . .

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

Name ....

Address ....

....

In the unlikely event that I win the £20's worth of software, I would like the following games (not necessarily strategy!)

....

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Completed coupons should be sent to *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*, to be received no later than 1 September 1987.

GAMELESS IN GAZA

Dear Philippa
Looking at reviews, talking to friends and generally being nosy I notice that, on the whole, two factors of wargaming stand out.

One: power. People love making their forces run about massacring enemies, especially if the enemy has many more units than you, as in *Tobruk*.

Two: 'modernness'. I am one of those people who gawp out of the window and watch the RAF fly-past, and study the news for new weapons and tactics. Many 'modern' wargames are on sale, such as *Theatre Europe*, *Battlefield Germany* and one or two variations on Vietnam.

What I am waffling toward is Middle East wargames. Many generals think Israel is a military wonder, and I'm sure if games producers took this into account they'd be onto a big hit if they put some thought into the program. I wrote to PSS with this thought many moons ago, and so far nowt has happened. Surely, dear Philippa, you can pull a few strings and ears?

Gary Watson, York

Unfortunately, nobody pays any attention to my ear-pulling! I quite agree that the Second World War is overexposed, but I suppose the reason we haven't been regaled with Middle East wargames is that designers feel the software-buying public would have difficulty identifying with non-Western countries.

PI

THIRTY WORDS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

TOP SPECTRUM MAG, 43 issues young, seeks readers for free classified ad page (genuine). Interests include pen friends, hardware/software swaps, homegrown software, fanzines, French firmware. Sorry, no trade ads accepted.

Yes – as part of the Government's new Minions Creation Scheme, CRASH is offering you **FREE** classified ad space! (Cue the Classifieds Minion.) You can use it to advertise anything related to the Spectrum or other areas that CRASH covers (such as PBM and videos).

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By the way, if you send an ad in PLEASE don't ring up the new Minion asking when it's going to be published. She won't know – all the ads will be typeset as they come in, and we'll just put as many in each issue as possible.

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† Addendum to Rule 1: Roger Bennett won't accept any of that stuff about 'this is not a profit-making organisation — we didn't mean it, it just happened that way'.

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Up in CRASH Towers, the reviewing team has to be very careful to ensure the Spiky Haired Ones from ZZAP! don't get the chance to dribble Cherry Coke and splatter sarnie crumbs all over the keys of their Spectrum Reviewstations. Part of my Minion duties involves keeping the office computers clean and tidy – and it's no good trying to get biccie crumbs out of the back of a ZAPPed Spectrum with a vacuum cleaner, nor is there any point in asking Mummy Minion to pop a Spectrum in with the washing up!

Admittedly the Spiky Haired Ones may not invade *your* games-playing zone, so why do you need a high-quality, gubbins-proof, double-seamed Spectrum cover complete with a CRASH logo to dress your Spectrum up in? Simple. ZZAP! reviewers may not inhabit your home, but there might be a dog . . . a little sister maybe? A cat? A little brother? Perhaps you don't have full control of your elbows 24 hours a day, and have been known to tip over a can of pop or a cup of tea?

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RASTERSCAN

Two names to pop up in the Tips recently, Al **and** Ric, **have been popping a lot. Here's another hack from the dynamic duo hailing from Pirton in Hertfordshire. The following POKEs provide extra time and rid you of all those logic problems.**

MERGE"" in the *Rasterscan* loader and enter the following lines:

```
35 POKE 40078,201:
   POKE 40153,201
36 POKE 39228,0
```

Once more into the breach, dear friends . . . and other Shakespearean references. Switching analogies, if I may, I sometimes see myself as a tiny finger in the crumbling dyke of gamesters, holding back the waters threatening to engulf the abilities of players in defeating the cruel endeavours of programmers to provide ever harder, ever meaner games. It's a nice conceit – others may claim I'm merely Mangram, King of Cheats.

In that case, you can understand why I really like mega cheats, such as the one that earns its senders this month's Tips Prize – £20 worth of software. They are M J Colclough and J Ankers from Matlock, Derbyshire, and the cheat is no less than 377 landscape access codes for Firebird's great game *The Sentinel*.

THE SENTINEL

Mr Smith, **of the** Haxby Hackers, **has been bending my ear of late, reminding me that he lives in Pocklington and not Haxby. I'm sure it's very important to get this right. So, now we've got our geography sorted out, type in this listing, run it, start the tape from the beginning and think of Pocklington – you'll be blessed with infinite lives in *The Sentinel*.**

```
10 REM SENTINEL
20 REM BY THE HAXBY HACKERS
30 CRASH AUGUST 1987
40 CLEAR 26800
50 LET TOT=0:LET HAXPOC=1
60 RESTORE
70 FOR I=38192 TO 38267
80 READ A:LET TOT=TOT+HAXPOC * A
90 POKE I,A:LET HAXPOC=HAXPOC+1
100 NEXT I
110 IF TOT <> 304658 THEN PRINT "ERROR
   IN DATA": STOP
120 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: CLS
130 PRINT AT 21,8; INK 7;"START SENT
   TAPE"
140 LOAD""CODE
150 CLS
160 RANDOMIZE USR 38192
1000 DATA 33,57,149,34,63,205,195,0
1010 DATA 205,205,87,206,122,254,46,192
1020 DATA 33,87,206,34,66,205,62,195
1030 DATA 50,58,91,33,82,149,34,59
1040 DATA 91,201,50,107,92,33,103,149
1050 DATA 17,6,91,1,37,0,237,83
1060 DATA 178,91,237,176,195,61,91,33
1070 DATA 62,150,34,202,126,62,150,50
1080 DATA 58,133,34,31,146,175,50,114
1090 DATA 146,195,0,221
```

STORMBRINGER

And there's plenty of storm clouds hovering around Ludlow at the moment. Huge great black things, absolutely vast compared to the miniscule vapour that follows Magic Knight around in his latest quest. So, if you're having problems, Steven Hepworth **and** Stephen Laurie **from Walmersley, Lancashire have come to your rescue with a few tips that should help get you well into the game.**

Start off by dropping Gadget X and go right to Robin's little hut and pick up the Chicken. Go left through Spooky Forest to the screen just before Berewolf, stand in front of the middle plant and cast a Pass Plant spell. When transported, pick up the Elf Horn. Go back to the plant and cast the same spell to return. Go right and pick up the Bottle. Go right again and check to see if the carried Chicken has laid a Golden Egg. If it has, take and read the Newspaper from Robin and then go left to the Sword in the concrete. Pick up the Disguise as requested in the paper.

Go right to Entwood. Take and wear the Magic Talisman and the Brass Ankh. Take the Wand from Aramis Le Peux and command Robin to go to sleep. Go as far right as possible to the castle entrance, go in but avoid the Axe. Fall down the hole. Pick up the Teleport Pad, Key and the Teleport (if need be drop everything except the Chicken, the Egg or the Newspaper), and you should now find yourself in Limbo.

When in Limbo drop the Wand Of Command, pick up and wear the Shield, pick up and wear the Power Boots and pick up the Wand Of Command again. Drop the Teleport Pad in Limbo. Go left, drop the Wand Of Command, have a drink and drop the Empty Bottle. Return to the castle, jump over the hole and go right until you reach the room with the fork shape on the wall.

The menu should now have a pull lever option, so pull the lever. Pick up the Bottle Of Liquid. Go as far right as possible, jump up onto the Stool, jump on to the blue thing and continue pressing up until you can go no further. Go right, jumping over the holes in the floor, down the one-way passage, keep on going left until you reach a big White Statue. Jump over the hole in the floor and go under an Arrow. Drop the Advert.

Jump on top of the Advert, pick up the Arrow and Teleport, then go left and drop the Newspaper. Give Robin the Arrow (or go right). If the Chicken has laid an Egg then give it to Robin and wake him up. Go to Berewolf's screen, blow the Elf Horn, summon Robin, command him to help and he will shoot Berewolf.

Berewolf should now have transformed into a Teddy Bear. Drop the Advert and pick up the Teddy. Jump right onto the ledge, don't fall onto the floor. And then . . .

More solution as we get it. In the meantime here are some POKEs for infinite lives against the storm cloud and other meanies.

```
1 REM STORMBRINGER
2 REM BY CLIFF HULCOOP
3 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
10 CLEAR 25170: PRINT "PLAY STORMBRINGER TAPE FROM
THE START": LOAD "" SCREEN$: LOAD "" CODE
20 POKE 38860,33
30 POKE 46716,33
40 PRINT USR 37632
```

HEAD OVER HEELS

'What about this then Mr Head?'
'Well, I don't rightly know Mr Heels . . . Wassit?'
'It's one of them there hackers, been poking us to pieces.'
'Whadda they done then?'
'Infinite lives, Mr Head.'
'From The Wizard of Southsea I'll be bound, Mr Heels.'
'Well, with a bit of help from Mike Dunn. Type in the listing, run it and start our game tape from the start.'
'Super! On to Safari then Mr Heels.'
'Quite so, Mr Head.'



```
1 REM HEAD OVER HEELS
2 REM BY THE WIZARD
3 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
6 CLEAR 64500
7 LET T=0:LET W=1
8 FOR F=32000 TO 32170
10 READ A:POKE F,A
15 LET T=T+1
20 NEXT F
25 IF T<> 5486535 THEN PRINT "ERROR IN
   DATA":STOP
30 PRINT AT 10,1;"START HEAD OVER
   HEELS TAPE"
50 RANDOMIZE USR 32000
100 DATA 221,33,203,92,17,234
110 DATA 6,62,255,55,205,86,5
120 DATA 48,241,243,237,94,33
130 DATA 44,125,229,33,173,98
140 DATA 229,51,51,17,163,252
150 DATA 1,22,3,33,253,94,62
160 DATA 202,237,79,195,173,98
170 DATA 33,70,125,229,33,199
180 DATA 252,299,51,51,17,209
190 DATA 221,1,232,2,33,209,252
200 DATA 62,196,237,79,195,199
210 DATA 252,33,209,252,17,209
220 DATA 138,1,92,0,237,176,33
230 DATA 228,138,34,233,138,34
240 DATA 237,138,33,218,138,34
250 DATA 245,138,33,255,138,34
260 DATA 9,139,62,195,50,29,139,
270 DATA 33,116,125,34,30,139
280 DATA 195,209,138,175,50
290 DATA 166,255,62,195,50,99
300 DATA 255,33,250,250,34,100
310 DATA 255,33,145,125,17,250
320 DATA 250,1,50,0,237,176,195
330 DATA 55,255,33,0,0,34,133
340 DATA 163,33,34,25,34,115
350 DATA 163,62,33,50,120,163
360 DATA 50,123,163,49,255,255
370 DATA 195,48,112
```

BUBBLER

***Bubbler* by Ultimate – Blubber by CRASH – that's why we're all going on a diet (or some of us, see the *Killed Until Dead* comp on page 87). Barnaby Page is the exception, the man, who by some miracle of nature, can eat his favourite food of Gnocchi for hours and not put on an ounce of flab. Meanwhile the CRASH crew'll stick to their big 'n' baggy shirts. Incidently, infinite lives from** Cliff Hulcoop.

```
5 REM BUBBLER
6 REM CLIFF HULCOOP
7 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
10 CLEAR VAL "24064"
20 LET A=NOT PI
30 LOAD""CODE
40 RANDOMIZE USR VAL "32768"
50 POKE VAL "61455", VAL "201"
60 LOAD""CODE
70 RANDOMIZE USR VAL "61440"
80 POKE VAL "57515",A
90 POKE VAL "57516",A
100 POKE VAL "57517",A
110 RANDOMIZE USR VAL "24064"
```

UNIVERSAL HERO

'We don't need another hero . . . ' but a few more POKEs for Mastertronic's arcade adventure wouldn't go amiss. Thanks again to Cliff Hulcoop **infinite lives may be enjoyed – no monsters and total immunity.**

```
1 REM UNIVERSAL HERO
2 REM CLIFF HULCOOP
3 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
10 LET TOT=0:LET CH=1:FOR A=32768 TO
   32812: READ B: POKE A,B: LET
   TOT=TOT+CH * B:LET CH=CH+1:NEXT
   A
20 IF TOT<>68762 THEN PRINT "ERROR IN
   DATA":STOP
30 PRINT "PLAY UNIVERSAL HERO TAPE
   FROM THE START"
40 POKE 32800,255:POKE 32801,150
50 POKE 32805,17:POKE 32806,140
60 POKE 32808,10:POKE 32809,147
80 PRINT "PLAY TAPE FROM START . . ."
90 PRINT USR 32768
100 DATA
   55,62,255,221,33,0,91,17,128,0,205,86,5,
   48, 241,33,29,128,17,95,91,1
110 DATA
   16,0,237,176,195,0,91,62,0,50,0,0,62,201
   ,50,0,0,50,0,0,195, 0,130
```

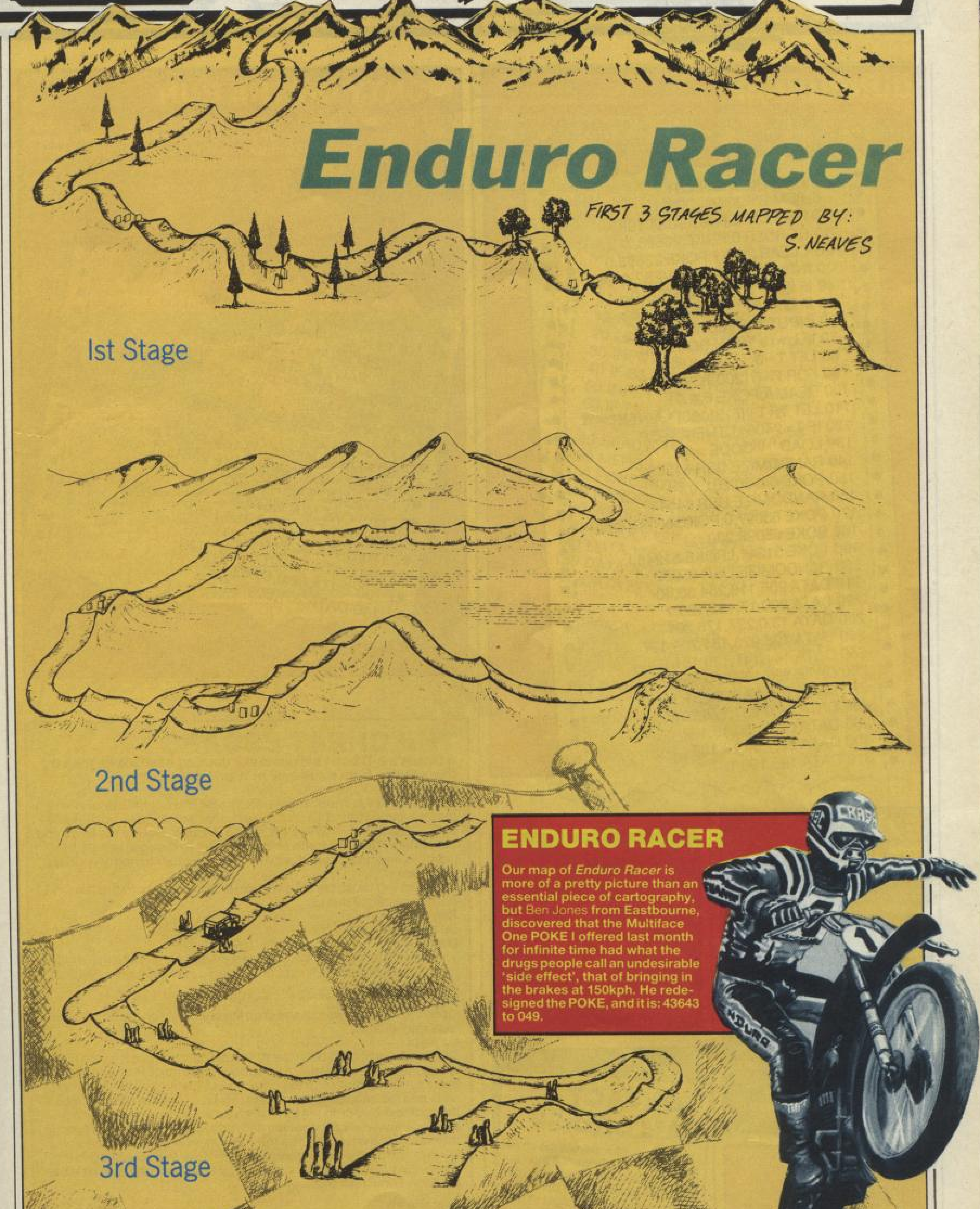
FUTURE KNIGHT EDITOR

Erm, apologies dear readers; in the June issue I was so carried away by the exciting fact of a *Future Knight* screen editor that I completely forgot to tell you how to access it. Colin Glaister **was quick to point out my little omission.**

When *Future Knight* is loaded, on the menu screen press the EDIT, S and K keys together. The keys to edit the screens are:

Q,W,P,L – cursor directional control
U – selects a building block
F – shifts forward to the next screen
B – shifts back to the previous screen
S – places a block at the cursor's position
BREAK – returns you to the *Future Knight* game menu

Enduro Racer



ENDURO RACER

Our map of *Enduro Racer* is more of a pretty picture than an essential piece of cartography, but Ben Jones from Eastbourne, discovered that the Multiface One POKE I offered last month for infinite time had what the drugs people call an undesirable 'side effect', that of bringing in the brakes at 150kph. He redesigned the POKE, and it is: 43643 to 049.

GUNRUNNER

Despite battling with exams, Jon North **has managed yet another hacking routine, this time for Hewson's gunrunning shoot-'em-up.**

```
5 REM GUNRUNNER
6 REM BY JON NORTH
7 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
10 BORDER 0:POKE 23693,7
20 CLEAR 25317:POKE 23658,0
30 INPUT "INFINITE LIVES? (Y/N)"; I$
40 IF I$= "Y" THEN LET I=0
50 IF I$= "N" THEN LET I=61
60 INPUT "LEVEL? (1-19)";L
70 IF L>19 THEN GO TO 60
80 LET T=0
90 FOR F=51200 TO 51252
100 READ A:POKE F,A
110 LET T=T+(F-51190) * A:NEXT F
120 IF T=240641 THEN STOP
130 LOAD "" CODE
140 RANDOMIZE USR 51228
150 POKE 64530,201
160 RANDOMIZE USR 64511
170 POKE 65097,0:POKE 65141,64
180 POKE 65098,200
190 POKE 51241,I:POKE 51246,L
200 RANDOMIZE USR 65082
210 DATA 205,118,254,33,40
220 DATA 200,17,198,128,1
230 DATA 13,0,237,176,201
240 DATA 128,223,181,209,177
250 DATA 144,141,139,151,206
260 DATA 198,199,200,33,0
270 DATA 252,17,255,251,1
280 DATA 19,0,237,176,201
290 DATA 62,61,50,19,192
300 DATA 62,1,50,28,188
310 DATA 195,198,187
```

MONTY ON THE RUN

After many pleas to print a routine for the egregious mole's second adventure, John Bramley **from just up the road in Shrewsbury has come to the rescue with infinite lives, and some POKEs, to make sure the crushers, monsters and water no longer kill.**

```
5 REM MONTY ON THE RUN
6 REM BY JOHN BRAMLEY
7 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
10 CLEAR 24649
20 PRINT AT 8,3;"PLAY MONTY ON THE
     RUN TAPE"
40 POKE 63756,195: POKE 63757,235:POKE
     63758,255
50 FOR N=65515 TO 1e9: READ A
55 IF A=999 THEN POKE 23612,0: RAN-
     DOMIZE USR 52500
60 POKE N,A: NEXT N
100 DATA 62,24,50,156,135
110 DATA 62,201,50,141,134
120 DATA 62,201,50,157,143
130 DATA 62,0,50,80,154
140 DATA 201,999
```

EXPRESS RAIDER

Hey, pardner! Did you know that more of them pesky trains can be taken and han'somely raided when there's infinite lives strapped to your low-slung hips? It's as simple as Ma Coltrane's blueberry pie – just pass the first plum loco Express and then press triggers 1, 9, 8 and 7 together and you should have 'em! Your lives run out as usual, but then you start from where you left off. Thanks to David Beck who noseyed on down from Castlefield – a one-horse hicksville from somewhere or other.

CHRONOS

I did have some POKEs in for *Chronos*, but they didn't work, so instead I'll offer you this little tip from NME. Type 'jing it baby' into the high score table. You should then be provided with a mega laser – definitely helpful, if you can get to the high score table of course . . .

VAMPIRE

Completing Code Master's platform game couldn't be simpler if you follow this tip provided by Richard Peake of Preston, Lancashire. Hold the 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 keys down together and you'll be transported to the shoot-out section. Shoot the fanged-one 40 times, then shoot straight for his blood-sucking heart, and you've done it.

CONTACT SAM CRUISE

Listen ya punks, dere's dis cheat in da game, as fingered by Mark (Fingers) Benson from Ashby-de-la-Zouch (the home of Ultimate). All you gotta do, if you get slung into da jug issa pressa da Caps Shift and P keys togedda, and you turn, like, invoisible. Isana dat helpful?

THE GREAT ESCAPE

If Ocean's 3-D brain blower is still causing headaches, then try this solution from Ian Banner **of West Lothian.**

Day One

Collect the key from under the watchtower and open the door where the lock-pick is found. Drop the key on the floor and pick up the lock-pick. Open the door where the spade is found. Collect the torch and the papers. Take the torch and the papers to the room where the spade is and drop them down the tunnel. Return to normal duties.

Day Two

Open the red cross parcel and drop the contents onto the floor. Return to normal duties.

Day Three

Do the same as day two

Day Four

The wire cutters should be in the red cross parcel. Take them to the room where the spade is and drop them down the tunnel. Return to normal duties.

Day Five

Open the red cross parcel and drop the chocolate on the floor. Return to normal duties.

Day Six

The compass should be in the red cross parcel. Take it to the room where the spade is situated and go down the tunnel. Pick up the torch and take the compass to the other end of the tunnel. Drop the compass and return for the wirecutters. Go back to where you dropped the compass and drop the torch. Pick up the compass and wait a few seconds. Now run up to the wire and cut it. Drop the compass outside then return to the tunnel. Drop the wirecutters and pick up the torch. Now go and get the papers and take them to where you dropped the wirecutters. Now drop the torch and pick up the cutters. Wait down the tunnel until next morning.

Day Seven

Wait until you hear the alarm for roll call. Now run up to the wire and cut it. Drop the cutters and pick up the compass. Now, run off the screen – and you've escaped.

BARBARIAN

Arrrgh! The very title brings me out in goose bumps after tackling the FORUM this month! However, if your game is like mine . . . Thwack! Thwump! Sssslice! Ughhhh! . . . it isn't much of a solution; try this one from Brian Entecott **of Aylesbury,** James Morris **from Southport and** Steven Greaves **from Witton instead . . .**

As soon as you start the game, knock your opponent into the corner by rolling into him and then constantly knock him over. After every two rolls, kick him down until dead.

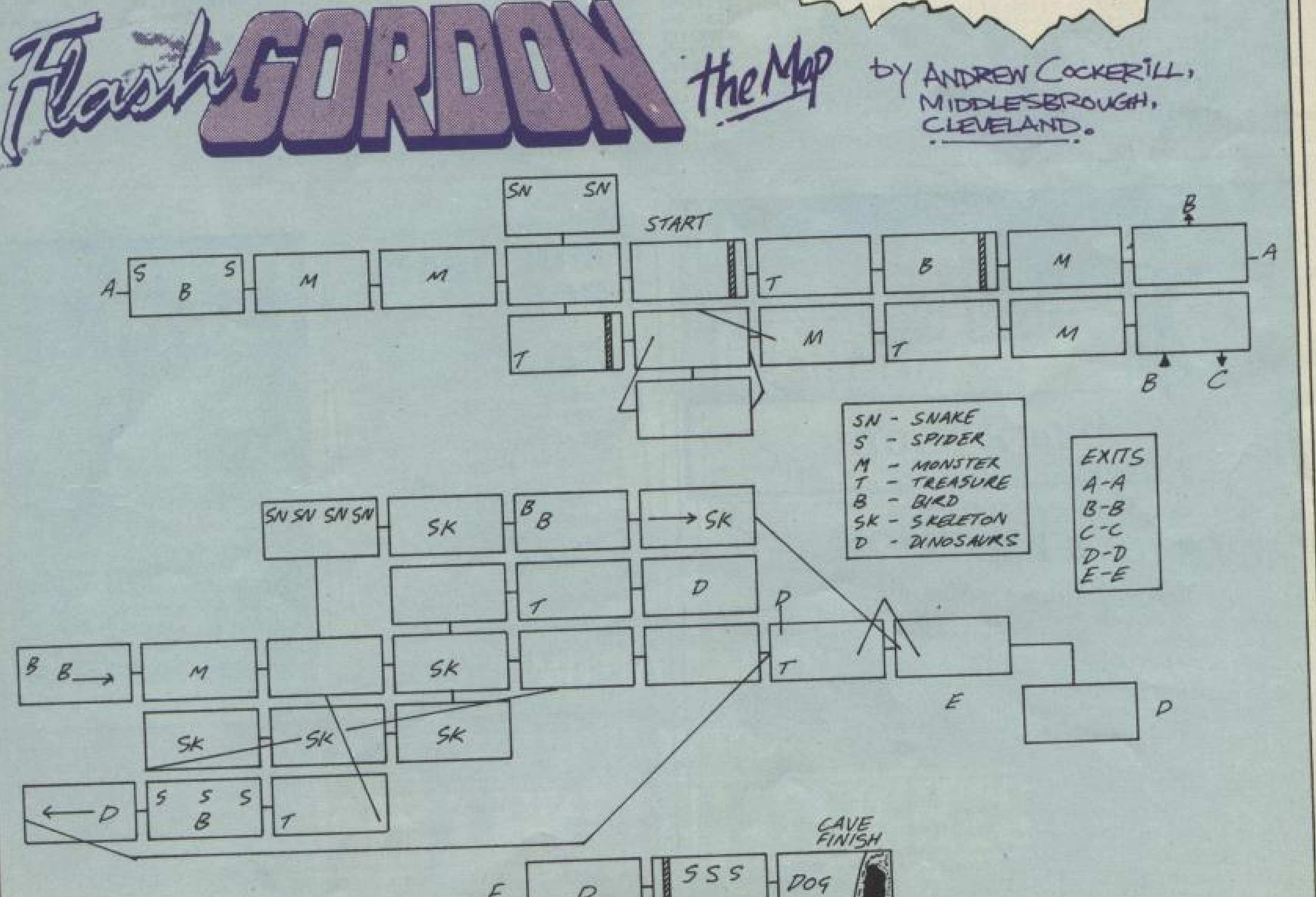
On level seven, when you've killed your opponent keep pause pressed, then, as you disappear and walk into the room again, the wizard and the princess should be waiting for you. When the wizard shoots a fiery ball jump over it (it's easier with pause on), and follow this with a quick roll towards him. He should shrivel up letting the princess come to sit by your leg. Ahhh!



FLASH GORDON

Okay, so *Flash* is reviewed this issue, but it's had a few weeks out on the streets. And anyway, you don't *have* to type in this routine from Jon North **(our man on the streets of Sutton).**

```
10 REM FLASH GORDON
11 REM BY JON NORTH
12 REM CRASH AUGUST 1987
20 LET B=58:LET T=58
30 INPUT "BULLETS? (Y/N)"; B$
40 IF B$ = "Y" THEN LET B=50
50 INPUT "TIME? (Y/N)"; T$
60 IF T$= "Y" THEN LET T=50
70 FOR =23536 TO 23546
80 READ A: POKE F,A: NEXT F
90 MERGE "": POKE 23795,0
100 POKE 23796,0
110 RANDOMIZE USR 23778
120 POKE 59676,91
130 RANDOMIZE USR 57120
140 DATA 175,T,44,198,B
150 DATA 227,191,205,240
160 DATA 227,201
```



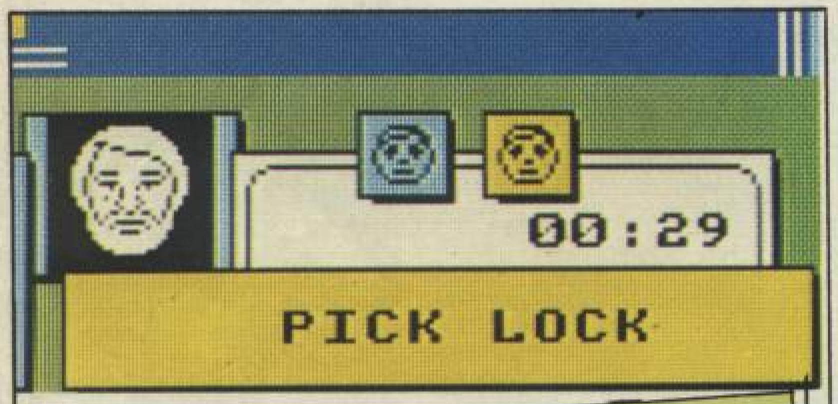
PLAYING TIPS

THE SENTINEL

As I mentioned in the intro, M J Colclough **and his partner in crime,** J Ankers, **sent me 377 landscape access codes for Firebird's modern chess game. The two completed all 10,000 levels, and were upset that after all their hard work, there was no congratulatory message; the game merely clocked back to the first landscape and gave an access code relevant to the number of energy units they had left. Isn't that life?**

There were too many codes to typeset, so I reproduce a facsimile of their sheets . . .

LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE	LAND	CODE
								3297	15846688	4960	06433957	6578	41840898	8405	94452483
								3325	79883898	4988	61408501	6611	97528134	8448	44996647
								3341	84807568	5012	56969520	6643	28789656	8485	67383768
								3362	65273695	5031	94559933	6681	77583795	8511	74978464
								3388	98443635	5056	84473664	6716	13746853	8536	89609853
								3404	93675375	5078	84952847	6752	82879458	8573	84395094
								3435	77619629	5080	88697501	6784	48872608	8607	35590660
								3461	67538664	5105	95459407	6810	51440147	8651	44457564
								3485	32967736	5122	67419661	6846	70299255	8671	90089555
								3509	94984256	5137	99460963	6870	60685495	8706	98359433
								3548	84756767	5157	24023559	6897	50813876	8741	75826349
								3584	45477599	5170	81939687	6916	64512779	8775	87309763
								3614	17575939	5173	63091084	6945	04277529	8809	48127447
								3643	15580204	5218	96756295	6982	06877909	8832	21925796
								3673	79008776	5244	37856399	7024	25525499	8866	82556771
								3698	02566207	5280	50502875	7053	67068990	8902	45574951
								3733	69976095	5311	55256817	7090	68435586	8918	59177918
0005	43983865	0433	96198865	1224	49894780	2278	66487787	3762	75092914	5335	27769474	7125	63955186	8951	63392816
0006	37418839	0422	67386673	1255	66775269	2313	10666745	3785	66947731	5368	63305769	7159	88615835	8974	71683852
0008	46986565	0464	97839879	1286	67780884	2318	76621066	3816	76230904	5405	99172244	7181	38998481	9000	03824407
0010	42346548	0484	25234656	1299	07024228	2348	02600569	3839	95472944	5441	49238876	7218	78221896	9033	15246674
0011	36798141	0502	79386674	1333	38689994	2354	56284679	3872	22989485	5474	57159646	7253	21887706	9074	09668124
0013	74274656	0515	17386898	1373	62103664	2380	55594387	3910	84447691	5502	50575590	7290	23747218	9102	25325456
0018	06855873	0534	42831821	1401	75908157	2385	87917184	3945	78899694	5528	95678919	7326	82570291	9138	57059465
0020	87457664	0552	43939179	1424	64769853	2408	93054911	3971	48459660	5558	73029998	7356	87478775	9174	59594666
0023	95571296	0577	97481647	1466	46997392	2426	58984950	4005	82689351	5595	25569856	7376	14733141	9200	66253747
0026	88879285	0598	62606968	1495	98516949	2447	55066110	4028	68106888	5625	87896965	7413	82589145	9219	02177085
0030	69767034	0624	91590924	1531	74306678	2482	27134867	4062	70094084	5648	69586647	7443	67638866	9251	56959276
0043	37234566	0641	97193428	1553	76969040	2515	64912600	4108	54463639	5675	64046668	7479	97675809	9283	47815966
0046	79762535	0647	96598150	1579	89884261	2538	47756798	4134	95563786	5706	44994934	7518	54959462	9305	43465850
0062	22698418	0673	69886157	1605	10644587	2567	94262453	4167	86674555	5744	27434740	7551	56778675	9343	73980159
0074	45977455	0687	77137686	1627	04755580	2603	59582416	4201	67794737	5782	94574777	7585	67744966	9381	47694381
0078	50879594	0706	18755735	1652	68521488	2632	96961255	4224	76812902	5812	84807155	7623	89954289	9406	01753557
0084	65026999	0732	35547788	1666	84925989	2661	93695500	4251	26554157	5852	66435656	7644	62374787	9433	36732500
0086	78269016	0739	49259870	1695	81528696	2701	58831454	4288	84852717	5884	94395187	7683	53547318	9460	45195536
0091	98825894	0767	45949987	1729	49956362	2726	05691735	4336	58831456	5918	68288014	7716	19379654	9485	69994719
0110	55877549	0785	95139647	1742	49658143	2752	57794761	4370	66871283	5948	94615767	7742	50072971	9519	75849956
0126	65280897	0798	83775557	1763	27618795	2776	55477929	4403	05164668	5990	17035248	7772	82998759	9547	73894640
0138	67341674	0812	83945796	1793	44072862	2801	78499595	4448	27796851	6020	41129009	7796	75755415	9576	86270870
0157	94197426	0828	69897391	1820	61891637	2819	47258966	4475	42436591	6057	19619377	7839	87846529	9603	55651676
0170	62430074	0847	76356436	1841	34667698	2852	66396523	4516	86398525	6089	34567945	7870	90916821	9642	85496286
0186	87946484	0869	81754192	1861	88856848	2889	62506859	4552	89696504	6123	38367762	7900	45465484	9680	86815648
0194	78417482	0902	44975094	1880	97278526	2925	60578656	4582	64860989	6165	71758920	7928	79449976	9722	98174355
0197	69426589	0923	90556487	1895	11591822	2951	21465028	4597	52141667	6205	56014806	7953	59538296	9756	71419398
0210	78847741	0938	37878450	1918	44478934	2989	47459590	4618	94043449	6229	60212094	7987	88868568	9791	78664305
0221	15846269	0966	68917598	1946	69768568	3013	70042997	4642	00799414	6257	98889525	8010	91648217	9825	26867972
0237	87036464	0986	87639671	1983	41094469	3040	85764888	4674	66664035	6289	61041999	8046	76457597	9857	18977694
0252	40097467	1007	38345983	2013	69562723	3068	27881404	4709	83445845	6315	39909894	8080	98386456	9898	22689497
0267	69519290	1026	44296659	2042	64753837	3095	21681462	4740	58414159	6344	69968346	8123	56846403	9929	65244234
0286	97517958	1053	81264895	2067	78485869	3126	19419078	4766	83687880	6362	56159536	8159	56997596	9963	82598922
0303	93217473	1067	61238476	2091	24245455	3156	35418665	4790	86748499	6392	72521467	8194	99939631	9993	72388451
0328	89428752	1085	70671677	2118	46827526	3160	78560576	4814	44959286	6427	08933541	8216	47882790	9996	87546491
0363	54995188	1106	55374471	2149	58558406	3196	22676088	4851	20654976	6449	39981731	8247	81390966	9999	05991278
0378	61579772	1125	53656769	2172	65438847	3224	47484144	4884	66678802	6482	88816933	8295	68153688		
0400	83754805	1159	48475617	2215	87459659	3250	76087886	4910	85069883	6502	57659448	8325	33047447		
0409	57516076	1186	19119797	2256	57029889	3282	35878543	4935	19253437	6544	55447496	8371	65037914		



THEY STOLE A MILLION

If you follow the POKEs listed below, Mark Sutcliffe **from New Arlesford, Herts, tells me, then the game is made a lot easier and you can gain £999,900 – which ought to be enough for anybody (certainly more than I'll ever earn).**

Load the game and then save any team using the option in the program. Pull the plug on the Spectrum, then load the saved data file into ram. Pull the plug on the Spectrum, then load the saved data file into the empty computer using LOAD" "CODE. Now enter the POKEs directly:

POKE 28766,153 (£990,000)
POKE 28767,153 (£9,900)

Save the altered data file by typing: SAVE "SWAG1" CODE 28672,764, then load up the game again, followed by loading the altered data file.

Multiface One owners need only put the POKEs in directly, although the effect will not be shown until the cash held has to be reprinted by the program.

MULTIFACE POKES

The following useful tid-bits come from Stu Mitchell . . .

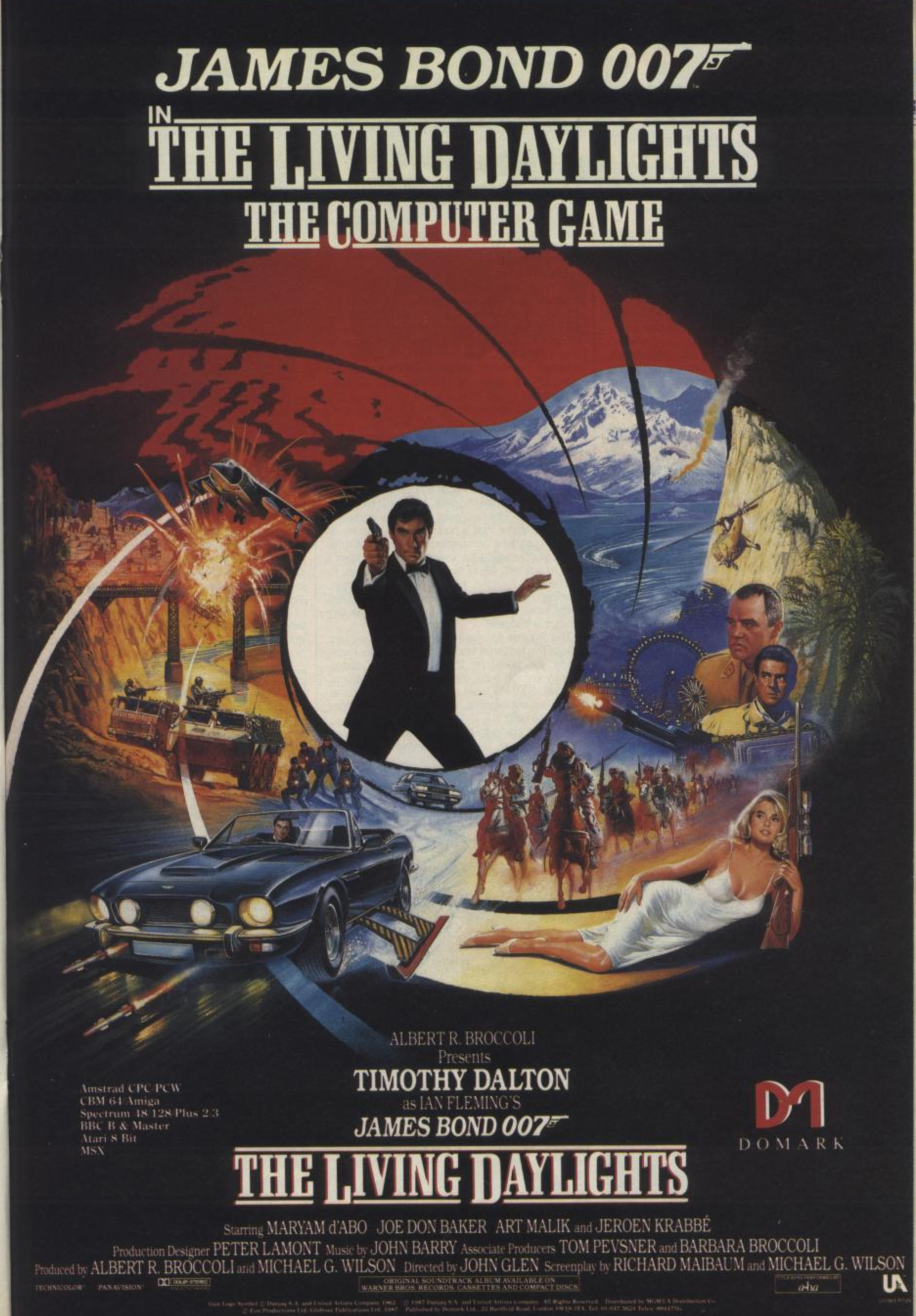
Mario Bros 50362,255 and 51273,255
Krackout 46565,0
Head Over Heels 42195,0
Transmuter 28878,0
Dynamite Dan II 29003,0
Bounder 36610,0
Cobra 36515,183
Batman 3798,0
Army Moves I 54597,0
Army Moves II 53772,0
Auf Wiedersehen Monty 41137,0

DOWN TO EARTH

Now, before Robin Candy turns his cap back to front and starts poncing about like Ben from *Curiosity Killed The Cat*, here's a tip on Firebird's offering from Darren Mott who lives where grow the cider apples – Somerset.

Pressing keys 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 simultaneously automatically clears the current level and moves the player on to the following one. This can be done on any of the 30 levels, but won't allow you to actually complete the game properly.

Thank you all for all those letters suggesting the best POKE is one in my eye – may your power packs ever waver close to a hi-score. My own POKE is to turn off the lights and go home to an extraordinarily well-earned rest, a mere antidisestablishmentarianist at heart, that's me. Please don't send stamped-addressed-envelopes requesting tips by return, I'm afraid there's just never the time to cope with them. Send your tips, POKEs, cheats, hints and those ever-valuable maps to LLOYD MANGRAM'S PLAYING TIPS, CRASH, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*. I'll be back next month, Insh'Allah.



JAMES BOND 007
IN
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS
THE COMPUTER GAME
ALBERT R. BROCCOLI
Presents
TIMOTHY DALTON
as IAN FLEMING'S
JAMES BOND 007
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS
Amstrad CPC/PCW
CBM 64/Amiga
Spectrum 48/128/Plus 2/3
BBC B & Master
Atari 8 Bit
MSX
DOMARK
Starring MARYAM d'ABO JOE DON BAKER ART MALIK and JEROEN KRABBÉ
Production Designer PETER LAMONT Music by JOHN BARRY Associate Producers TOM PEVSNER and BARBARA BROCCOLI
Produced by ALBERT R. BROCCOLI and MICHAEL G. WILSON Directed by JOHN GLEN Screenplay by RICHARD MAIBAUM and MICHAEL G. WILSON
TECHNICOLOR
PANAVISION
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK ALBUM AVAILABLE ON WARNER BROS. RECORDS, CASSETTES AND COMPACT DISCS
a-ha
UA

VOTE 87

THE CRASHTIONNAIRE RESULTS



Are you man or woman enough to read CRASH? Can you afford to? Is CRASH your style? Do you watch the Beeb a lot? All these and many more vital questions will be answered in the next few lines – stay tuned to this column

Yes, it's the annual CRASHTIONNAIRE SHOW, and your host tonight is the ever-effervescent, eternally ebullient, eponymously and exacerbatingly entertaining Lloyd (largest marrows in the land) Mangram . . .

Good evening, and thank you. And tonight's first contestant to take the chair will be answering questions about sex. CRASH is pretty unequivocal about its gender, with 98.4% of those who answered the questionnaire saying they are male, with a mere slip of a gel being 1.6%.

And what of the age of tonight's contestants? Well, the largest single age group turns out to be 14 years, though a few crustier readers bring the age of the average CRASH reader up to 16.14 years (down slightly from last year's figure).

Not surprisingly, then, when we turn to occupations 75.55% say they are still at school, no doubt playing computer games when they should be revising for their examinations. Get those certificates, guys, otherwise you won't be joining the 6.31% at college or university who also read CRASH, or the 11.42% who enjoy full-time work. Of the rest 1.7% are in part-time work and 5.01% are unemployed, which is well under the national unemployment rate.



These figures tie up pretty well with those for the next question, which was about the amount you spend each week on computer games. 79.01% fork out between £2 and £5, 18.51% manage golden tinklies to the tune of £6 to £10 weekly, and then it drops sharply; only 1.86% leave between £11 and £20 on the counter, and an infinitesimal 0.62% can afford over £20 a week. If we take the CRASH readership figure (see below), and allow the average £3.50 per week the 79.01% spend, then it follows that £838,897 and 50p goes into the software industry's coffers every seven days!

We wondered how many of you are interested in the serious stuff of utilities and asked whether you have purchased one during the past six months, or intend to within the next six. The two sets of figures correlate well, and show that a touch over a quarter of CRASH readers own serious software – a mite more encouraging for utility producers than I had imagined. 26.11% purchased utilities in the past six months, and 28% intend to soon, making something like a potential 85,000 utility sales in the next half year. That's a big serious whoopee!

The figures for peripherals are similar, but reflect the fact that once a purchase has been made the potential for further sales drops slightly (which isn't the case with utilities, of course). 30.04% have purchased a peripheral in the last six months, while 23.71% intend to within the next six.

Now we come to new computers, and here there are some interesting answers. Do you intend buying a new machine during the next six months? 26.15% say 'Yes' and 73.85% say 'No'. So what is it that the little over a quarter of CRASH readers want to get? An encouraging 72.8% want a Spectrum 128/+2 or +3; a fairly high 13.6% want a Commodore 64 or 128; 4% are opting for an Amstrad (mostly the CPC664), while 9.6% want to go 16-bit – 8% for the Atari ST and 1.6% for the Amiga.

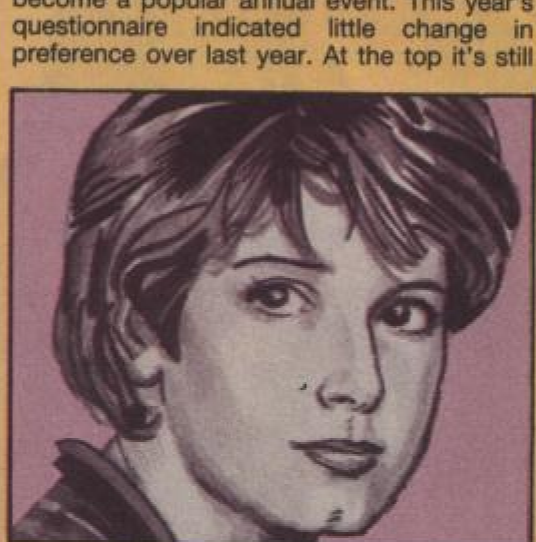
Enough of the hard stuff and back to games. What's the major influence on your decision to buy a computer game? Well, highest on the list is a magazine review (and so it should be!) – 27.4% reckon so. Price is a key factor, but it's pipped at the post by a friend's recommendation at 17.6% – price comes in at 17.4%. Advertising hype and the game's software house come next, neck and neck at 13.1%, while authors only poll 11.4% as an influencing factor (probably reflecting the fact that authors are becoming more anonymous as time goes by).

And so to the magazines and CRASH in particular. When did you first buy a copy of CRASH? The elite who got the fabled first issue total 9%, another 8% joined between that and Issue Six with a further 9% up to Issue 12. Things leapt up with 20.2% joining between 13 and 18, 18.4% between 19 and 24, 13.8% between 25 and 30, and another 16.4% up to Issue 36. You obviously like CRASH well enough, too – 74.5% of readers have bought *every* issue since their first.

Then there's the vital question of how many literary pirates read your copy (without buying their own – low-down cheats). Across the board it averages out that 3.16 persons read your copy – and if you discover who the .16 of a person is, let me know.

On the question of what other computer magazines you buy or read, *Sinclair User* comes out top on points by a pipsqueak with 24.55%, closely followed by *Your Sinclair* at 23.12%. *Computer & Video Games* notches up 20.79%, the now-defunct *Computer Gamer* managed 11.63%, *Popular Computing Weekly* earns 11.56% and the more serious *Personal Computer World* receives 8.35%.

Charting your favourite CRASH features has become a popular annual event. This year's questionnaire indicated little change in preference over last year. At the top it's still



PLAYING TIPS (thank you, though most of the credit for that goes to girlie tipster Hannah Smith). Reviews come second, previews third, competitions fourth, special reader offers fifth and Subscription offers sixth. News is next at seventh place followed by the FORUM, the charts and, surprisingly (but encouragingly enough for the software houses) advertisements in tenth position.



Ever onward; Lunar Jetman makes it in at 11, Simon's TECH TIPS at 12 and ADVENTURE TRAIL a very lucky 13. TECH NICHE polls place 14, followed by the editorial, a strategically positioned FRONTLINE and



PLAY BY MAIL at 17. Hunter S Minson slips in at 18 with CRASH COURSE bringing up the tail at 19.

There were simply too many comments to mention!

Our coverage of software in three categories, namely reviews, Previews and News comes out at 90.22%, 81.54% and 72.77% respectively.

Onto the reviews themselves. Are they detailed enough? 'Yes,' says 85%. Long enough? 'Yes,' says 86%. But 55% think there aren't enough screen shots – a situation unchanged since time began. And 76% think the comments box is sufficiently detailed.

Agreeing with our review ratings can be a touchy subject (see the FORUM almost any month!), but 7.7% always agree with a CRASH review and 75.5% agree more often than not – a pretty good figure I'd say. 14.9% agree occasionally, 1.8% rarely and a negligible niggling 0.1% never agrees.

Should we substantially change the rating system? Here the answer was comfortably conclusive, with 82.6% answering 'No!'

We double-checked on one of the earlier questions by asking whether you use CRASH as a source of reference when buying games (having established that a magazine review is the major source of influence when buying a game); over half, 58.5%, say they do and 40.6% admit to using CRASH sometimes.

What about the magazine's covers, often a cause of shock and horror when Oli gets a bee in his bonnet (though several covers within the period covered by this questionnaire were painted by Ian Craig). 66.4% think they are great, 31.7% reckon they're okay and 1.9% hate them, saying they're rubbish (but at least the ink doesn't come off on the fish'n'chips).

There's more polarisation of feeling when it comes to features like TERMINAL MAN and TAMARA KNIGHT. 24.8% think those two are great, 47.2% rate them as 'okay' and 28% dismiss them as rubbish, though individually TERMINAL MAN came out much better, almost 50/50.

CRASH has always avoided a Reader's Challenge, but we thought it only fair to ask your opinion, and as you know, the answer resulted in last month's startup form. Here's the reason why: 85.4% say 'yes' to a Challenge, and the preference is clearly for a Reader-versus-Reviewer Challenge – 69.5%.

And talking of reviewers, since we started naming the regular CRASH reviewers we've been wondering how often you agree with the individuals, though there've been some additions of late. Between Ben Stone, Paul Sumner, Mike Dunn and Richard Eddy the result is – Ben Stone top with 39.2%, followed by Mike 'Skippy' Dunn at 30.2%, then Paul Sumner at 21.3% and Richard Eddy with 9.3%. It has to be said that Richard's lower mark reflects his relatively recent appearance on CRASH review pages.

That concludes the main part of the CRASHTIONNAIRE, but we also asked some other questions about your eating, drinking, viewing and listening habits. On soft drinks 73% of CRASH readers spend up £1 a week and 25.4% drink between £2 and £5 worth. The estimated average weekly spend is £1.84. Packet foods like crisps fare about the same – 75.6% crunch through £1 worth, with 22.9% consuming £2 to £5 worth. Estimated average weekly spend is £1.71

Fast foods such as hamburgers clock up a mite more: 65.7% spend up to £1, 29.5% up to £5 and 4.3% up to £10, bringing the weekly average to £2.10.

Fast listening produced some interesting results, because despite the long-standing belief that Auntie Beeb can be the bore, she wins out with CRASH readers – 55.4% listen to Radio One, 32.3% to Local Commercial stations, 10.2% to Local BBC and 2.1% to good ol' Radio Luxembourg. The average amount of hours spent listening in to radio works out at 8.66.



And BBC wins out on the telly stakes too. 52% prefer BBC1, 43% tune in more to ITV, Channel 4 gets a vote of 4% and BBC2 bottoms out at 1%. CRASH readers average a fairly hefty 24.4 hours of watching per week (but not when there's a telethon on).

And that concludes the votes for CRASH readers. May I thank the returning officer and his staff for their speedy count, and the police for their efforts at crowd control . . . – but it's not quite the end of all the business, for there are some CRASHTIONNAIRE prizewinners to mention.

Outright winner for being clever enough to be drawn out of the vast box first is **Peter Wallage** from Polegate in East Sussex, and Peter wins himself £50 worth of software, plus a CRASH Cap, T-shirt and Sweatshirt. The four runners up, who each receive £10 worth of software, plus a CRASH Cap and T-shirt, are: **Simon Proctor** from Brough, North Humberside; **Edward Askew** of Buckingham; **Peter Mill** from North Berwick, East Lothian; and **Way Ken Wong** from Calne in Wiltshire.



CRASH ZX SPECTRUM

READERS' SPECIAL OFFER

Super salubrious! Slashed smackers! Superb software from SOFTWARE PROJECTS

SPECIAL CRASH READERS' PRICES
Any two games £5.50
Any three for £7.00
Any four for £8.50
Inclusive of VAT, post and packing

All of these Software Projects classics were highlights of 1984, and they're all as immensely playable and thrilling today as they were then (so we're told by Lloyd) . . .

'Hallo, hallo, 'ave we got a special offer for you – know wot I mean? Sweet as a nut, these games, an' prob'ly not in the shops, eh? All kosher too, none of this 'fell off the back of a lorry . . . ' Nah mates, it's from that geezer Gaz up in Software Projects oo's 'made available' some games from their, whachamacallit – back catalolgue. Check the prices, check out the games. It's, like, yer only chance – so better step it up. My bee-eut-iful assist'nt will give yer the lowdown.
Squeeze us a lemon, do us a favour, knock it on the 'ead. Innit?

FULL REVIEWS
To check up on all the lowdown on the games on offer, see the full reviews . . .
PUSH OFF Issue 1 Page 82
TRIBBLE TROUBLE Issue 4 Page 9
ORION Issue 4 Page 82
ASTRONUT Issue 12 Page 36
THRUSTA Issue 2 Page 39
JET SET WILLY Issue 4 Page 8

PUSH OFF

Loosely based upon the old 'Pengo' coin-op, it received 85%, and later, when featured in RUN IT AGAIN, won even higher acclaim. Pushing bricks around a spider-infested garden's the theme and it's sure to push your frustration factor to the limits.

ORION

Defeat the Dark Horde in this addictive number (76%). Your android army's been captured and the task is to rescue them from an underground maze in traditional 'Berserk' style. Good, fast, blasting fun.

JET SET WILLY

A CRASH Smash from Matthew Smith, and one of the world's most famous games. Willy's made to clear up his messy mansion after a party to celebrate his new riches before housekeeper Maria will let him go to bed. Wandering through 64 screens of assorted platforms there's many a hangover-induced nasty to put a stop to your frantic activities.

TRIBBLE TROUBLE

Playing Brian Skywalker, there's five screens of tribble-rescuing action in this CRASH Smash. Herding the pesky pink creatures involves bridge-building (tribbles drown when their fur gets water-logged), staying clear of firebugs (partial to raw tribble) and cactus plants upon which the tribbles quite happily commit suicide. Highly original.

ASTRONUT

Go nutty with a space-age platformer. The landscapes, all decorated with colourful graphics, houses resource blocks which are pushed around to a transporter before proceeding onto the next level. 'Very good, excellent, addictive!' cried the reviewers. They gave it 81%, and well they might.

THRUSTA

Not so much a shoot-'em-up, more a kind of crush-'em-down. Seated at the controls of Thrusta One, you've got to destroy alien nests from which eggs continually hatch. At 73%, reeking in playability and with large and smoothly animated graphics, it's a good example of what made Spectrum games great.



CRASH / SOFTWARE PROJECTS READERS' OFFER

O Wondrous Aggie, Aunt of all Aunts,
Tripple gosh-wow, you've pulled another plum from the pie of life. Send me my Software Projects classics as fast as you can. I've filled in the form and ticked the relevant boxes, AND I've made out a cheque/postal order payable to NEWSFIELD LTD – now you do your bit.

Please tick the game boxes of your choice, and then an appropriate Option Box as well.

☐ **PUSH OFF**
☐ **ORION**
☐ **TRIBBLE TROUBLE**
☐ **ASTRONUT**
☐ **THRUSTA**
☐ **JET SET WILLY**

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Please note: offer closes 24 September 1987.

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Address ....
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Your most favourite of professional Aunts (accept no pale substitutes) will be putting your Software Projects games in the post in a jiffy (that's the bag, not the time). She'll be as quick as she can, but please allow up to 28 days for delivery. Send your form and payment to:

PLEASE DEBIT MY VISA/ACCESS ACCOUNT £ ☐

I wish to pay by Visa/Access (delete as applicable)

Name (please print) ______________________
Cardholder's Address: ______________________
____

Signature ______________ **Expiry Date** ______________

Please Charge My Account No:
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

TECH NICHE

JON BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Sorry – JON BATES's column of sound advice is silent this month (we were pushed for space, which makes a change, y'know?). Jon will be back next month . . . with a bit more than usual, perhaps . . .



And in the black box, Romantic Robot's Multiprint interface

TECH TIPS



This month SIMON N GOODWIN explores Beta BASIC 4.0 with its 128 hardware commands, discovers an interface which can handle printing from anywhere inside a program, and corrects some mistakes of times past . . .

PRINTING WITH A PEDIGREE

ROMANTIC ROBOT launched its Multiprint interface at the ZX Microfair in May. It's a Centronics parallel interface for all versions of the Spectrum except the + 3, featuring a unique front panel which can be called up at any time, whatever program is running, to save or copy screens, change printer settings, and apply POKEs. Similar controls are available from inside a BASIC program.

The Multiprint comes in a typical black box which contains two 8K banks of ROM and RAM, as does the Multiface.

The RAM stores configuration information till you disconnect the power to the computer. Romantic Robot says the RAM can also hold utilities designed for the same company's Multiface, such as the *Genie* hacker/disassembler, the *Gamester* POKE-generator, and several forthcoming packages which will be reviewed in future columns. Early versions of *Genie* won't work, though, as Romantic Robot has reassigned the control ports. (The company will supply an upgrade for £1.95.)

Multiprint hooks itself up to device p, channel 3 in ZX BASIC, so it can be used in programs with normal LPRINT commands. Special REM statements can set margins and control the translation of BASIC tokens – a nice touch.

BUTTON OPTIONS

By pressing the red button on top of the Multiprint, you can call up the rest of the ROM software at any time. A temporary menu then appears on the bottom two lines of the screen, as with the Multiface. You can edit memory, adjust printer settings, print the display, and quit or restart the program.

The toolkit to edit memory lets you store data anywhere in RAM, typing the values in hex or decimal. A 16-line transient window can be opened to tabulate memory contents as text or in hex. Register values can be examined and changed.

PRINT OPTIONS

The printer-setting menu lets you impose margins and a line-width for text. You can print any group of consecutive lines from the display; by default the Multiprint outputs all 24 lines, rather than the top 22 printed by COPY.

Some Centronics printers require separate wind-paper and move-to-margin signals, known as line feed and carriage return. Others, like my ageing Epson MX-80, can make do with carriage return on its own, and wind the paper on twice if both signals are sent. One keypress turns off the Multiprint's line feed.

You can tell the interface to translate tokens – character codes greater than 127 – into Spectrum keywords, or to transmit them straight to the printer. The second option is useful when you want to send control modes.

SCREEN PRINTS

The last option on the printer-setting menu controls the effect of the PRINT option on the main menu.

The first setting gives a text COPY, which prints all the characters onscreen very quickly but ignores graphics. The code only recognises the Spectrum's 32-column ROM character set, so

The Multiprint 'shaded' screen dump gives some sense of colour . . .





► ... though the 'normal' setting is quicker

it's not much use with programs that use alternative fonts, like the majority of adventure games.

The second option gives a fast graphics printout. It takes about 40 seconds for my Epson MX-80 to produce a horizontally-stretched image: 110mm by 68mm for a full screen.

The third option, Large, uses the same scale as the COPY built into the Spectrum 128. The Multiprint is about ten per cent faster than the Sinclair routine, though, taking a little over two minutes to produce a well-proportioned 165mm-by-130mm printout. This option takes no account of colour. Every set point on the screen is printed in black, so lines plotted on a black background print out as black on white, unless you've got a coloured ribbon and black paper!

The last and best option works to the same scale and speed, but uses shading to distinguish colours. The result looks like a rather grainy photo of a black-and-white TV screen.

These 'Polaroid' screen printouts are useful for almost everyone with a Spectrum and a printer. Whether you're running communications software, business programs, adventures or platform or strategy games, it's very useful to be able to print the screen at any time – when mapping, for instance.

The graphics options only work with Epson-compatible printers, so beware. I get letters every month from people whingeing that they bought a bargain printer and can't get any software to work with it. If you're buying a printer, or a printer interface, you *must* make sure it will work with the rest of your system before you part with any cash. Try it out, or get a guarantee.

ADDED VALUE

In theory, a simple routine loaded into the Multiprint's internal RAM would turn the unit into a tape-backup interface. This extra feature would make it better value, but Romantic Robot is unlikely to want the Multiprint cutting into the market for its Multiface – especially as the Multiprint, with its Centronics cable, has higher manufacturing costs than its predecessor.

Both should be able to run add-on packages such as *Genie* and *The Gamester*. The Multiprint scores on its Centronics port and COPY routines. But the Multiface has the advantages of a through-port at no extra cost, built-in copying software and a joystick port.

CROWDED MARKET

The Multiprint costs £40, or £45 with the unique option of an edge connector at the back for other peripherals. It works very well with both the Spectrum 128 and 48K model, and the magic button marks it out from the competition.

This interface has a good pedigree, coming from the makers of the Multiface and the designer of EuroElectronics's ZX LPRINT 3 and Kempston's E printer interfaces. Those old products have fewer functions at the same price as the Multiprint, but Romantic Robot may face stiff competition from RAM Electronics's £35 RamPrint interface, reviewed in CRASH Issue 35, with its built-in text editor and joystick port.

► ... but on the 'large' setting every point is printed black



IF YOU KNOWS OF A BETA BASIC, GO TO IT

AT LAST it's worth programming the Spectrum 128 in BASIC – Betasoft has produced a new version of its peerless Beta BASIC system for new models of the Spectrum. The faults that make the 128 a pain to program have been cured, and there are extra commands to bring all the hardware under BASIC control.

The 128 appeared almost four years after the launch of the original 48K Spectrum, but has only two extra BASIC commands. PLAY gives control over the Midi synthesizer ports and the three-channel sound chip – as long as we don't mind BASIC stopping while sounds are generated. SPECTRUM tells the system to revert to 48K mode, disconnecting the sound chip, serial port and 80K of memory.

Apart from these new commands, the standard 128 offers a simple RENUMBER option and facilities to store files on a 74K RAM disk. A screen editor lets you edit and enter programs character by character, without looking up obscure SHIFTed combinations to satisfy the 48K keyword-entry scheme, where some keys print whole words.

The 128's editor is good in theory, but annoying in practice. The cursor doesn't warn you whether you're about to type graphics, capitals or small letters – though in the 48K version it does, which is helpful. And there's a delay after the first key is pressed in an editing session, and no key-buffer, so the first part of your command may be lost unless you type v-e-r-y- s-l-o-w-l-y.

There's another delay whenever you enter a line, as the system converts it back into keywords so the 1982-vintage interpreter can make sense of it. That conversion sometimes goes wrong, reordering the values you entered, as recently explained in this column.

So Sinclair's 128 BASIC lets the machine down, but Betasoft has the answer.

FAST AND NEW

Beta BASIC adds more than 100 new commands and functions to ZX BASIC and speeds up or improves many of the standard features. And Beta BASIC 4.0 (not Gamma BASIC!) is the first to take advantage of the Spectrum 128 hardware.

The package comes in an inch-thick black plastic box. Inside you find a 90-page A5 manual for Beta BASIC 3.0 (reviewed in CRASH way back in February 1986 – Issue 25), a 30-page booklet covering the new features of Beta BASIC 4.0, and a single cassette with Beta BASIC 3.0 and 4.0. Tape-loading time is about three minutes.

Beta BASIC is compatible with virtually all disk systems and printer interfaces, and it fixes the bug which stopped you sending control codes to a serial printer from the 128. It's sensible to write for advice if you've got obscure bits and pieces hanging off your system, though.

On a 48K machine, Beta BASIC 3.0 occupies 18K of program memory, which is a bit restrictive. Version 4.0 uses 25K on the 128, but you can easily use the RAM disk for program sections or arrays of up to 64K (which you can't with Sinclair 128 BASIC), so the net result is usually an *increase* in RAM available for programs.

HARDWARE CONTROL

Beta BASIC 4.0 looks just like 48K BASIC when you load it, but the appearance is deceptive. You've got all the 128's hardware to play with.

A new BEEP command controls three-channel sound which plays continuously and doesn't stop your program running at the same time (hurrah!). Hundreds of sounds can be queued, and there are commands to empty the queues and check their contents.

You can control all the features of the sound chip, and the manual lists plenty of examples – trains, planes, boings, zzaps and crashes (of course). Music is trickier, as you must use internal note values (as listed in CRASH Issue 32) rather than note names or semitone numbers. The manual contains helpful examples, and PLAY works normally.

Beta BASIC 4.0 lets you store arrays on the RAM disk, rather than in the normal BASIC area. This gives you access to 73K of extra variable space. 1K of the standard 74K RAM disk is always used by Beta BASIC; a further 2K may be used for sound queues, and 10K during graphic FILLing. New commands let you read the

RAM-disk catalogue and file details from within a program.

Arrays on RAM disk can be sorted or searched very quickly with single statements. There's an irritating rule that references to RAM-disk arrays must be at the start of a calculation, though. The arrays use the format of DATA files, and you can copy them directly to disk or microdrive. Programs on RAM disk can be listed directly – there's no need to LOAD them first.

Routines can be merged or deleted automatically as a program runs – there's even an error-trapping function to tell you the name of a routine that's needed but isn't there. And it's possible to run programs of over 90K if you organise them carefully.

TYPING PRACTICE

In Beta BASIC you can select 48K-style keyword entry, with extra keywords accessed from graphics mode; 128K letter-by-letter typing; or an ingenious mixture of both. In this last mode, keywords at the start of a statement can be typed with one key, or letter by letter if you start with a space – an easy habit to pick up if you're used to entering text.

Common commands – LET, PRINT, GO TO and so on – can be typed with one keypress, and the others can be typed in full so there's no need to look up the required keyword.

User-defined keys are allowed. You can program any group of characters to pop up when you press SYMBOL SHIFT and SPACE followed by a letter or digit of your choice.

Like the 48K Spectrum, Beta BASIC edits lines one by one at the bottom of the screen, but editing is much easier than on the 48K. You can join and split lines at will, and edit lines by numbers with no need to LIST them first.

The UP and DOWN keys move quickly through a long line, and you can jump directly to either end of a line. Beta BASIC stores lines faster than 128 BASIC, though there's still a slight pause after you type ENTER.

If you like, Beta BASIC will automatically indent your listings to show the 'scope' of loops and tests. You can put premature line feeds into a listing, to arrange statements tidily.

The Beta BASIC toolkit lets you list procedures, groups of lines, variables and key definitions. There's an automatic line-number generator, convenient for entering listings. You can automatically search out and replace information in a program. And any group of lines can be renumbered, moved, saved or deleted in one step.

BLOCK STRUCTURE

If you're into structured programming, Beta BASIC will suit you down to the ground. It has named procedures with local or reference parameters, and you can set defaults for missing values. Recursion works fine, and there's no problem passing arrays, or lists of items to be processed one by one.

Besides the normal IF and FOR statements there's a multiline IF THEN ELSE and a general-purpose DO..LOOP with conditional EXITs allowed from any point. You can combine or 'nest' these structures as you like. There are also single and multistatement versions of ON GO TO and ON GO SUB, but alas no SELECT or CASE statements.

Beta BASIC even speeds up a few ZX BASIC commands. Some aspects of ZX BASIC slow down alarmingly as program size increases, but Beta BASIC avoids this, so FOR loops, GO TOs, GO SUBs and RETURNs can be up to 20 times faster in long programs.

Most statements work at the same slothful rate as normal, but the array-handling tricks can give an impressive speed-up. Often they let you replace a loop with a single machine-code command. Sadly, there's little prospect of a Beta BASIC compiler.

Array-handling is comprehensive, to say the least. New keywords quickly sort and search string and numeric arrays. You can shuffle whole rows in one mighty move, and the current 64K of memory can be treated like an enormous string array, which you can slice and set at will.

FUNCTIONS AND ESOTERICA

Beta BASIC 4.0 includes 30 new BASIC functions which translate values from one form to another in lots of useful ways. Machine-code support is lacking, apart from two-byte PEEK and POKE and number-base conversion functions. New integer operations include MOD and bitwise AND.

You can convert numbers into three-byte, four-byte and five-byte strings, which can be convenient for sorting and packing data into records. Extra trigonometric functions trade accuracy for speed.

Print-formatting allows neat tables of figures. Variable values can be edited on screen – as with INPUT, but with a default value entered for you. An ingenious command passes characters to the command line as though they were typed in, so a program can edit itself!

There's an alarm clock, with options for a continuous display and a jump to a certain line when the alarm goes off, but the clock loses time during disk and cassette operations. You can divert execution to a subroutine when each end-of-line is reached in the main program, which can be useful when debugging. Errors and BREAK can be trapped.

QUICK ON THE DRAW

Beta BASIC graphics commands include a FILL function which colours bounded areas of the screen. Version 4.0 uses 10K of RAM disk space as a work area, making filling spectacularly fast – almost any shape can be filled in in under a second. A function lets you check the number of points painted, and you can fill shapes with any pattern of 16 by 16 dots – great for wallpaper-designers.

Version 4.0 includes superfast line-drawing commands. DRAW is about two-and-a-half times quicker than normal; CIRCLE works over the screen border, and is more accurate and 12 times faster than normal. All the drawing commands, with the annoying exception of FILL, will work on the whole screen – not on just the top 22 lines. But Beta BASIC lets you confine display output to a window or a limited area of the screen.

Character shapes are based on the normal 8x8 character set, or a 4x8 alternative, but you can choose any character size. You can have one character filling the screen, or 24 lines of 64 characters. Text can be positioned with pixel accuracy. You can shift and scale graphics within a window, and use absolute coordinates, rather than offsets, when drawing lines on the screen.

Other commands let you independently manipulate the colour-attribute grid. Areas of the screen can be smoothly scrolled in all directions, or saved for later redisplay in various sizes. These commands are fast enough for static pictures and graphic design work, but they'd be rather clumsy for animation. There are no masked sprite commands for games programmers.

THE VERDICT

Beta BASIC shows the Spectrum off very well. It's elegant, reliable, friendly and much more powerful than BASIC add-ons for, say, Commodore or Amstrad machines. Like all BASIC interpreters it's a bit slow for shoot-'em-up games, but it's ideal for most other programming projects.

Beta BASIC 4.0 on the 128 is exceptionally powerful, with extra commands, faster graphics and full access to the machine's extra RAM and sound chip. If you intend spending a few hours programming the 128 in BASIC, Beta BASIC 4.0 is the best utility you could buy. It's not cheap, but you get a heck of a lot for your money.

Beta BASIC 4.0 costs £15.95 (upgrade from 3.0: £8.95) from Betasoft, *92 Oxford Road, Mosely, Birmingham B13 9SQ.*

UPDATES

■ Readers report that orders for *The Gamester*, an infinite-lives utility reviewed here in June, have been returned by the Post Office marked 'no such number'.
If you're reading this, D R, please write in and let CRASH readers know where to send their money.

■ There was a tech typo in line 170 of the RAM Music Machine sample-conversion program printed last issue. The variable I should be replaced by X, to match the FOR loop counter. Everything should work fine with this new line 170:

```
170 FOR X=26814 TO
26813+PG*256: POKE
X,(PEEK X)-128
```

NEXT MONTH

IT MAY be summer, but there's lots to write about: next issue I plan to review version 3 of the Swift Disk system, which adds a fast 640K 3.5-inch disk drive to the standard Spectrum and 128. I've been using an early version for a few weeks, and I'm impressed.

There's a £20 software prize up for grabs as usual, so keep sending your own tips to the usual long-winded address:

Simon N Goodwin,
TECH TIPS, CRASH,
PO Box 10, Ludlow,
Shropshire SY8 1DB

I'S A METRICAL DESIGNER

A simple recipe for metamorphosis

Have you ever wanted to customise a game and put your signature to it? Well now's your chance with CRL's *3D Gamemaker*. FRANCO FREY gives it a whirl

THE GAME is your typical *Knightlore* clone with 256 different rooms and the usual objects, obstacles and nasties. Fed up with the standard characters, objects and background, you simply create your own fantasy land or theme park.

The idea is not really all that new. Perhaps older readers may remember that odd excursion into games designing by Quicksilva, *Games designer*, where several different game structures could be configured from a wide choice of available graphic characters and attack waves. This was fairly limiting though, as it left little creation to the player, just a choice of combinations. Remember the Robin Candy Playing Tips cassette last year, that contained a program by Phil Churchyard which would let the player rearrange the rooms, objects and exits of *Sweevo's World* from Gargoyle. Again, it didn't allow you to create your own graphics. *3D Game Maker* does just that.

The package consists of three programs, **3D Graphic Editor**, **3D Room Designer** and **3D Gamemaker**.

As its name implies, the first provides a graphics utility, which accesses the available range of graphic blocks/sprites and allows you to modify or create your very own designs. Each graphic is assigned to a function, ie fixed or moving/crumbling object, background/room border block or player/nasty sprite. This function cannot obviously be changed, only the look of it.

Each graphic requires the generation of a mask – to clear the background – but this is made easier by the automatic mask generator, which follows the new object's outlines and provides a quick starting point for further modification. An individual block can be stored in a temporary buffer, so that it can be copied into the next graphic block – useful for moving sprites or for similar looking objects. The block can be flipped over from left to right and a fill routine provides some further help in the creation of your graphical element. SAVE, VERIFY and LOAD routines are provided for permanent storage.

The **3D Room Designer** is a facility for positioning objects and aliens at any point, and for the addition or removal of the exits which connect the rooms. The colour of each room can be specified. Each object position requires memory and a memory status indicator displays the amount of memory still left.

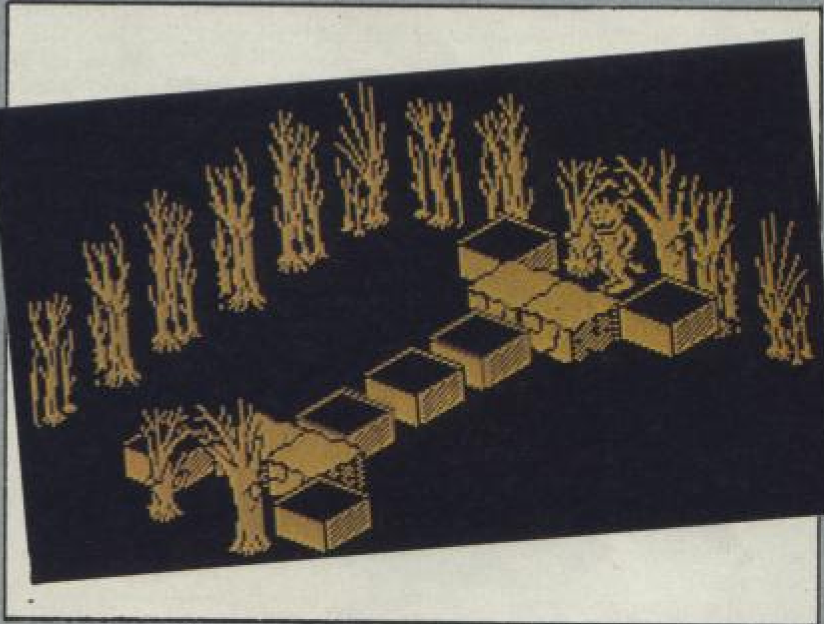
The game area is a 16 by 16 matrix of rooms, but only one quarter of this is displayed, with an indicator to indicate which quarter is active. The position of the current room is indicated in the lower right-hand corner of the screen along with the position of the current object within the room. A 15 by 15 matrix shows the horizontal position, and a bar graph the actual height of the object within the room.

The current object can be selected by scanning the complete graphic repertoire for objects and aliens, and the joystick/cursor keys are used to move the object about. An Epson screen dump may be executed for keeping a record of the game area. Generated room data may be saved, verified and loaded from tape for later use.

▶ On the Room Designer screen the lower left-hand block shows object's position within room, and beside it, the bar indicates its vertical position. On the right is the 8 x 8 grid of rooms, showing current room position, and beside it, the current quarter being viewed.



▶ A screen from *3D Adventure*, the game included in the package.

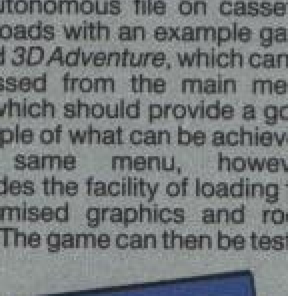


The **3D Gamemaker** is the master program which is required to save the customised version as an autonomous file on cassette. This loads with an example game called *3D Adventure*, which can be accessed from the main menu, and which should provide a good example of what can be achieved. The same menu, however, provides the facility of loading the customised graphics and room data. The game can then be tested and, if satisfactory, saved with the appropriate name as an independent game file.

The utility programs are very well presented and designing the graphics and the room layout is simple and enjoyable, as most of the commands are accessed in true point and click style.

If the package were to be judged purely on the merits of the sample game, it would not end up in the top charts, in fact it would be rated as a poor to mediocre version of the particular game style. But with the possibility of creating your very own version, it should interest some of the would-be m/c programmers, who will never make it on their own. As long as nobody expects to create a new games technique with it, *3D Gamemaker* should prove to be a versatile utility within the constraints of the program framework, but it's important to remember that apart from the disposition of the rooms and the objects, it's only the graphical look of the game that is going to change.

***3D Gamemaker*, CRL, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk, joystick or keys**





▶ From a ferocious snarl to an evil grin, the Graphics Editor is the meat of the program



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DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail

THE BIG SLEAZE

PRODUCER: Piranha
PRICE: £9.95
AUTHOR: Fergus McNeill

Now and again a piece of software looks a winner from the moment I open the package. Fergus McNeill – the comic genius behind *Bored Of The Rings*, *Robin Of Sherlock* and *The Boggit*, all spoofs of existing works, and more recently *The Colour Of Magic* – has teamed up with a company that knows how to handle a commercial proposition. The result is a marvellous send-up of the New York private detective slouching his way around the Big Apple of the Thirties.

Everything about this project gels to provide a thoroughly entertaining trip through the sleazy low life of Manhattan and beyond. The programming is competent and the presentation pleasing, with a highly readable typeface, but the main attraction is the writing style, which is so good it's hard to believe the text wasn't taken from a real novel.

Here McNeill graduates from adapting existing works, such as Terry Pratchett's book *The Colour Of Magic*, to using his own stories. McNeill's narrative style is refreshing, in the past tense rather than the present tense which jars in so many lesser games.

The Big Sleaze concerns the world of Sam Spillade, a dimwit private detective whose office, way up on 3024th Street, reveals to those passing just how thick Spillade is – he thought his window sign would look better if it could be read from the inside of his office. Puzzled at the lack of business his clever sign elicits, he competes with the motto 'No case too small . . . or too cheap'.

The first two cases to breeze into Spillade's unkempt offices are vastly different: a dame from out of town, and a patchwork dog. The dame has spent two weeks hanging out in Joe's diner waiting for her long-lost father to show; the dog has a note and a piece of a photograph its owner would rather not see put back together. Luckily for the owner, the parts of the photo are scattered about the city – but it's a taxing job for Spillade.

The screen consists of a simple picture with a permanent gun and PI badge in the top half, and the copious text pushing the picture off the screen from below. Anyone who's played *The Boggit* will be familiar with McNeill's verbose location descriptions and EXAMINE reports. Giving too many examples of these might ruin the game – but suffice to say that just about everything can be examined or poked about.

The ability to carry only five objects at a time is a restriction, not alleviated by the wallet which might have carried some of the smaller items. So it might be a good idea to smoke your last Lucky at the very start, with your feet up on your desk, giving rise to this short funny: 'I smoked my last Lucky and threw the stub away. I was going off these butts, slowly but surely. I guessed maybe I'd try putting the filter end in my mouth next time.'

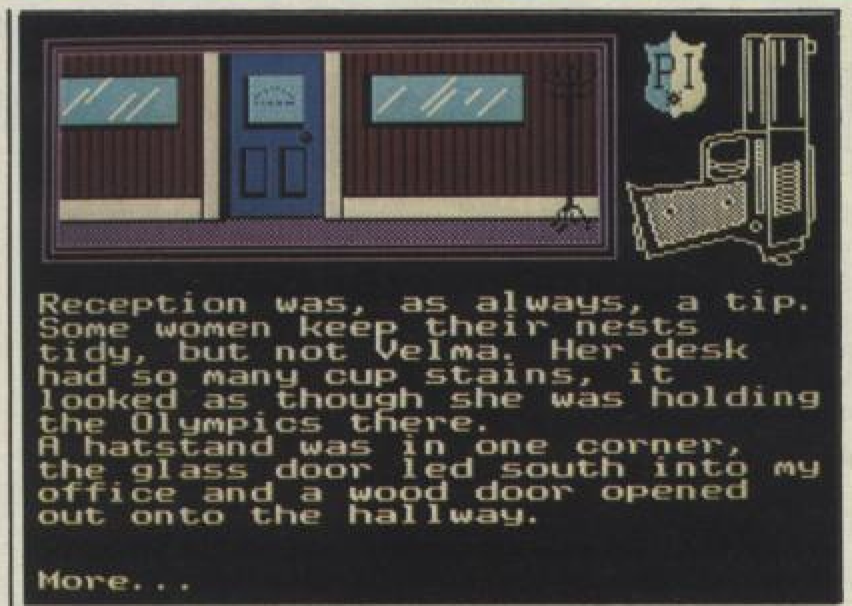
Try another short one, this time concerning the silly sleuth's coat: 'A genuine, trendy detective-style raincoat. It cost me an arm and a leg from the NY equivalent of Burtons (not literally, of course, otherwise it wouldn't have fitted me so well).' And somewhere in the adventure you might examine some dynamite before it explodes on you: 'The dynamite had a fuse at one end and 'You die, PI!' written on it in large friendly letters.'

Time must be taken into account while playing *The Big Sleaze* – otherwise you might chance upon a bar in the dead of night when even Manhattan ▶

▶ **It's a hard life for Private Dick Sam Spillade as he goes for a tramp on the lonely streets of Manhattan. Did the tramp enjoy it? Find out in *The Big Sleaze* – Delta 4's latest spoof adventure**







▶ Reception . . . sounds just like the CRASH office

drinking dens close for a few hours of shuteye. On the same theme, lighting the fuse to the dynamite will allow a few moments to retire to a safe distance (there's a clue in that last line, folks!).

WAIT is a useful command to pass moments when Spillade has no choice but to sit it out. And the command EXAMINE can be shortened to X. I discovered this last one myself but the instructions do tell you of the SAY TO character command – and a HELP routine which may give the occasional clue, but too cryptically to be useful.

The effects of locking the door at the base of Spillade's office building puzzled me. This prevents some hoodlums entering the building and causing trouble, yet somehow the dame and the dog get in with no bother at all. Curious.

The Big Sleaze is a three-part adventure and comes complete with an electronic magazine, *Sceptical 3*. The game's chief asset, apart from dealing with a familiar and highly commercial theme, is its well-written prose. Fergus McNeill has excelled himself with this one while still providing the laughs (some rude) which have made his name.

DIFFICULTY: one or two tricky bits
GRAPHICS: simple
PRESENTATION: neat
INPUT FACILITY: little beyond verb/noun
RESPONSE: fast
GENERAL RATING: a superb read

Atmosphere	95%
Vocabulary	89%
Logic	90%
Addictive qualities	95%
Overall	93%





INSPECTOR FLUKEIT

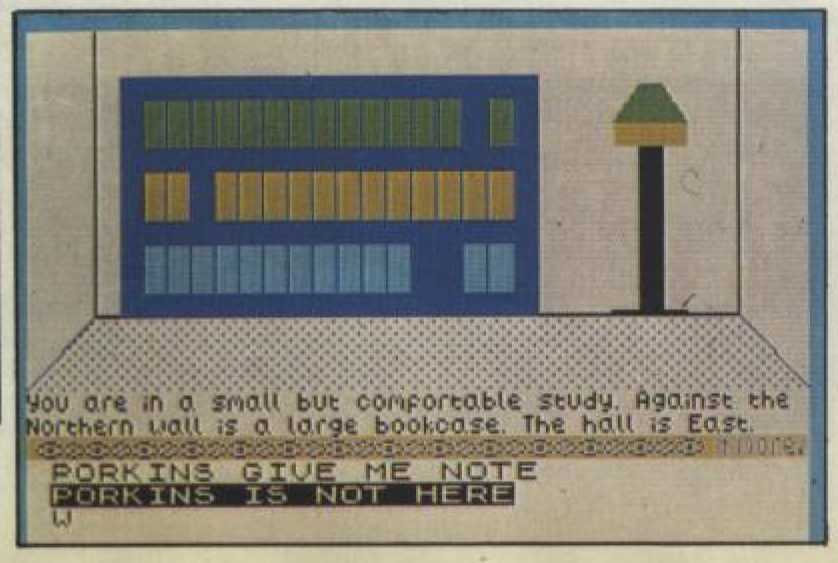
PRODUCER: Top Ten
PRICE: £1.99
AUTHOR: Colin Jordan

A professional cover bounds this cassette's worth of frivolity, with some of the smallest writing you could get on an inlay forming the instructions. But you'll need guidance – this isn't the straightforward affair it first appears.

Inspector Flukeit features conversations between characters – interrogations, as once again you take the role of investigator. The character interactions boil down to little more than chalking up some everyday banter or directly asking a character to hand over something you want to examine, but don't write the game off as a con trick; considering it's a cheap game, it's surprising how often it comes up with clever retorts to your input. And a REPEAT LAST COMMAND button shows some of the refinement in its programming.

As the eponymous Inspector Flukeit, you're called in to solve the mysterious disappearance of the brilliant Professor Mundle. You are ably assisted by your sidekick, Blunders, who is accident-prone but a helpful sort of chap. Together you must track down clues, interrogate suspects, and finally hand over the perpetrators of the ghastly crime. Blunders is your chief ally, reflected in the instructions with this set displayed prominently: SAY TO BLUNDERS, ASK BLUNDERS, TELL BLUNDERS, BLUNDERS! After a while you wonder if the chap is misnamed, as he becomes almost







dependably useful.

Other characters around the professor's Radley Mansion, including the porter, maid and gardener, might prove useful, though the diary found in the library gave me the easiest advance. And when the going is rough, a well-timed examination of the surroundings often smooths the way. Failing that, the adventure has a VERBS command which brings up some of the useful verbs allowed.

If it's the unresponsive characters giving you a hard time (they often daydream while you're talking to them, missing everything you say, or just gaze at you with a funny look), perhaps they'd like something from you to put their minds at ease and allow you to probe more deeply . . .

I've left the bad news about this game till last. This flaw was so bad that I almost gave up playing *Inspector Flukeit* before I got into it. The game, commendably, is written around the author's own system (termed 'Worldscape') but, as so often with homemade systems, the input routine is dodgy, leaving you wallowing and bogged down in keys.

It's not the worst input system I've played, it's just a little slow – and there's no beep on inputting each letter, which makes it all the more uncertain. The dropping of the usual input cursor is disorienting, and the game itself is very slow and ponderous, a reminder of BASIC days.

There aren't many pictures, and those that do pop up – to scroll quickly off again – are not of a high quality. And the look and feel of the screen is somewhat *Hobbit*-like, right down to the omnipresent WAIT marching roughshod over everything.

Inspector Flukeit is a terribly slow program and might test the patience of some, but for those who persevere there's a super little detective story just waiting to be discovered.

It's one of the first releases on the Top Ten label, which launched in June.

DIFFICULTY: use VERBS command and all should flow fine
GRAPHICS: sparse and simple
PRESENTATION: average
INPUT FACILITY: beyond verb/noun
RESPONSE: S-L-O-W
GENERAL RATING: flawed program, but a great little adventure

Atmosphere	76%
Vocabulary	78%
Logic	70%
Addictive qualities	79%
Overall	70%

THE MYSTERY OF ARKHAM MANOR

PRODUCER: Melbourne House
PRICE: £7.95
AUTHORS: Mike Lewis, Carl Cropley

Please, please don't make me go through this one again. I've read the instructions three times and I'm still not convinced there's much point in playing this game. It's not just that *The Mystery Of Arkham Manor* is annoyingly slow, or that it's fundamentally boring, it's that there doesn't seem to be a concrete way of scoring.

Let me explain. You are a freelance reporter on assignment for *The London Chronicle*. The idea is to jot down events in your notebook and take photographs with those newfangled things called 'cameras', this being back in 1924, when people got their news from things called 'newspapers'.

Only trouble is, how does the computer know if you've compiled a good report for your newspaper, or just made the stuff up?

And it's not just scoring which is hit or miss.

You're following up a story in Arkham, a quiet country village. One Colonel Lemin, a former MP and member of the Foreign Office, has sent a letter to the *Chronicle* describing some peculiar happenings around the hamlet.

▶ The Lounge Bar, well, where else do you expect to find a journalist?



After a so-so intro tune, you begin the game armed with the Colonel's letter and a note in your notebook to meet the old blighter at the railway station. He doesn't meet you, though, and playing a little further you find out why – he's dead.

You get this piece of vital information from his wife, who I snapped as one of my photographs. Don't ask me what you must photograph – I couldn't tell you. Scoring and finding a direction to the game is not easy.

Direction, indeed . . . that reminds me of something I'll get to after telling you about this camera lark.

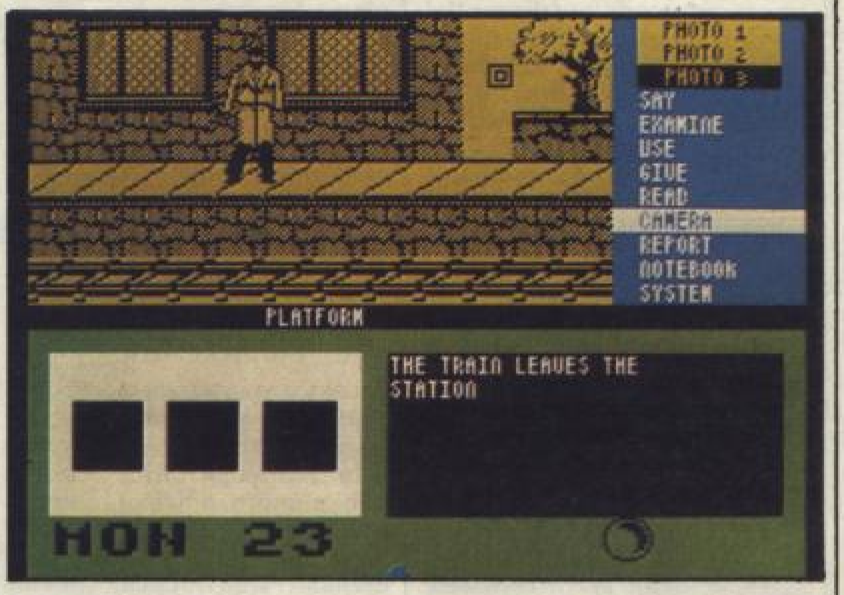
It being 1924, your camera is one of the early portable plate jobs. It's not in the same league as today's models, and you'll find it impossible to move the viewfinder above head height. Luckily, the camera assumes you want the head above the neck as well!

There are three photographic plates which can be reused; they're shown at the bottom left of the screen. The cursor-controlled movement of the viewfinder is jerky, like just about every control in the game. (The menu system is particularly clumsy and awkward, and slows things down.)

Right, that direction business I was on about. As if the game didn't have enough major failings, the programmer throws in an absolutely mad movement system: your character walks into a new location from the opposite side to the one you've chosen.

This crazy mannerism isn't apparent at every move, but it does fit in with the scheme of things in a game that doesn't know where it's going or which way it's facing. Knowing where you're going and where you might end up is almost impossible.

▶ Whooops! Looks as if our freelance hero has missed the train – shame



The report area, where you construct your own page for the *The London Chronicle*, isn't immune from bugs though it's important. Selecting a headline and then a photo I found that, quite rightly, my write-up began next to the photo, forming a neat border. But the next line of text ran right through the photo, ruining it.

I got a little fed up with my career at *The London Chronicle* and decided Arkham Manor was best left to the zombies that roam its graveyard. May old Lemin rest in peace.

DIFFICULTY: instructions are too clever and stupid at the same time
GRAPHICS: good
PRESENTATION: good
INPUT FACILITY: menus leading to submenus
RESPONSE: acceptable
GENERAL RATING: flawed, but an original idea

Atmosphere	68%
Logic	69%
Addictive qualities	58%
Overall	63%

▶

THE FANTASY

PRODUCER: Mediandroid
PRICE: £1.99
AUTHOR: Simon Jones

Mediandroid's first release *Delta 7*, a few months back, was only 99p – so you might expect *The Fantasy* to offer a little more for £1.99. Well, for reasons lost to time I didn't review *Delta 7*, but perhaps they were good reasons; *The Fantasy* is one of the worst pieces of software I've received for some time.

Its principal failing is a distinct lack of grammar and proofreading. A traditional text adventure stands or falls on the words it chooses and how it puts them together, and if the words are jumbled and misspelled the adventure falls to earth with a bump.

And *The Fantasy* just doesn't read right. Omissions of one or two words in just about every location description, frequent typing errors and a puzzling absence of apostrophes add up to an indigestible suet pudding of a game. Even if the author claims illiteracy like so many programmers, surely he could team up with a literate, or take on a literate for the proofreading stage.

Leaving a note for your mum you start the adventure and leave the house in search of your dad. To the west is the milkman and a bottle of milk. For some unknown reason GET BOTTLE always ends up with you dropping a mirror and it smashing into a hundred pieces. I say 'always' because you can attempt picking up the bottle and consequently drop the mirror as many times as you want.

If you GET MILK you do pick up the milk bottle but even then GET BOTTLE will bring up that mysterious mirror!

Moving swiftly east, you meet an old lady who hurries off – but not before dropping a rather useful knife. And the next location has you cast as the victim of a kidnap, presumably the fate of your father before you. A van pulls up to the kerb and a man brandishing a rifle throws you into the back of the vehicle and speeds off.

The following location is a smelly, damp, spider-infested hut. You are tied and gagged, and the screen goes black in sympathy with your predicament.

There's something very curious about this scene: you can pick up and examine the piece of wood even though your hands are bound tightly. Stranger still is the ease with which you can repeatedly open the door, again while supposedly restrained. Just to round things off a look at the inventory in this darkness reveals an illegible list – the author hasn't compensated for the change in screen colour.

The Fantasy isn't such a bad adventure storywise, but it'd take a person with a curious sense of humour to find out. Only buy this one if you find poor quality adventures a novelty.

Mediandroid (Sales) is at *285 Melchett Road, Birmingham Factory Centre, Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 3NN.* Incidentally, Mediandroid is run by Simon Jones of the *Wizz*, featured in this month's FANZINE FILE (page 48).

DIFFICULTY: reading the text isn't easy
GRAPHICS: none
PRESENTATION: poor
INPUT FACILITY: verb/noun
RESPONSE: just
GENERAL RATING: not good

Atmosphere	48%
Vocabulary	50%
Logic	47%
Addictive quality	48%
Overall	49%

OPERATION BERLIN

PRODUCER: Wrightchoice
PRICE: £3.95
AUTHOR: A J Wright

Wrightchoice's *Operation Stallion* was reviewed in the June bumper section; this is the second part of the *Operation* trilogy. The series has a £500 cash prize at its end to help you recover from all those operations.

Now there's almost a bit of topicality here, give or take a few months – we have an election where the Tories and Labour are neck and neck, eyeball to eyeball, celebrity to newsreader, and you're so uncertain of your future under a new government you think you'll get up to some good old espionage to rig things in your favour.

I suppose an Iranian angle would have been even more topical, but *Operation Berlin* is set in the divided city with its wall (25 this year).

Berlin is close to those red Russkies, so you can expect some less-than-pleasant introductions to the KGB – and you might think it stands for Kill Great Britain once you see what they have in store for you.

As with *Operation Stallion*, you play John Blake, otherwise known as The Fixer, and your bosses, the PM and Charles Jenson (CJ), are the only ones to know that your job in Government Records is just a cover for your secret work.

Recently a leading nuclear scientist, Professor Wolff, made a breakthrough in his research into a more efficient nuclear-powered engine. His Isotope XIV project unearthed a type of uranium which could provide more power to the drive units in NATO K9 class submarines.

Two days ago Wolff flew to West Berlin for top-level talks with NATO staff – but never turned up. Double agents discovered he was kidnapped by the KGB at Tegal airport and smuggled to East Berlin.

Unfortunately for Wolff, but luckily for the Western powers, the professor was injured in a car crash in East Berlin in the KGB's haste to deliver him to their bosses. But if Wolff recovers from his injuries he might be persuaded to decode his ciphered plans, and armed with his research the Soviets could deliver a crushing blow to the West. The plans must be recovered.

Operation Berlin has two parts, one on each side of the cassette. As with *Operation Stallion*, the first part has you on the trail of your boss, the difference here





being that you start the adventure at Heathrow. The first frame has a curious, almost full-screen drawing of a BUSY departure lounge – but the bar depicted in the picture is deserted! Perhaps the new licensing laws haven't come through yet . . .

As in *Operation Stallion*, the pictures are slowly drawn. Pressing a key scrolls most of them off. First item of the yarn is a newspaper, and you'd have to be illiterate to ignore its usefulness. The public address system lightens the mystery of why John Blake is at Heathrow Airport – he was, apparently, just about to board flight B347 to New York. Well, clearly our chap ain't going to make that flight, but instead you struggle through minor obstacles and take a taxi to the familiar building seen in *Operation Stallion*.

This building houses CJ's office and the 11 items to be taken on your mission proper in Part Two on the flip side of the cassette. But before I get ahead of myself, back to the check-in desk and a novel little routine: you have a natter with the check-in girl, with you only pressing a key to reveal each part of the conversation, which moves down a blank screen. It's a small touch but it's different. Another good effect is the fade-out of text, the words dissolving from the screen as you press a key.

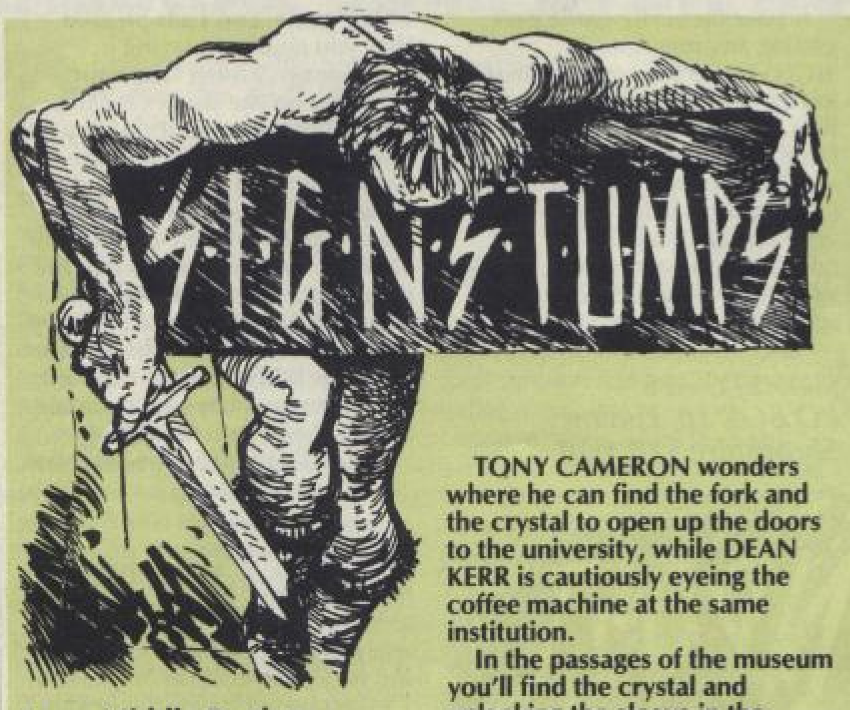
Getting to Part Two isn't difficult – solving the problems in Part One becomes obvious once you've visited all the locations inside the airport. But there's one area in the bank which might prove difficult. The problem here is vocabulary, but the commands VERBS and NOUNS point the way with their lists of useful words (incidentally, these lists are different from those in Part Two).

This second part is similar to that of *Operation Stallion* – though Wrightchoice have laudably done away with incomprehensible lines using up moves, each of which takes one minute from the 24-hour limit on the mission.

Operation Berlin is a fine game with a neat outlook, and it's available from Wrightchoice at *PO Box 100, Troon, Ayrshire KA10 6BD.*

DIFFICULTY: not difficult
GRAPHICS: reasonable
PRESENTATION: rather good
INPUT FACILITY: verb/noun
RESPONSE: fast text, slow graphics
GENERAL RATING: interesting

Atmosphere	77%
Vocabulary	76%
Logic	76%
Addictive qualities	74%
Overall	75%



From Middle Earth to Hampstead, here's another epic of BREWSTERised solutions . . .

JONATHAN LONGSTAFF writes: 'Recently I have been adventuring my way through the lands of Muddle Earth in the adventure *Bored Of The Rings* with my little furry companions. I have reached the third part of this great epic but I have run into a few problems . . .
1 What do I do with the microwave oven situated in the supermarket?
2 How do I get on the train?
3 What is the purpose of Madame Blah Zsa and her crystal orb?'

Thanks to GARY SPENCER'S tips I can answer the first two queries. Put the ring in the PWFO. The ghost gives you a HVO. Find the ticket collector and TIPPU him; get the ticket.

MAT JOBSON is bogged down near the start of *The Boggit* and wants to know what to do after getting the great ring.

Go through Boggiton and south again (you should be in a wood). IJEF JO USFFT. Go north till you get to the bridge. Go E, S; when you get to the hedge go down, E. When you get captured by the willow tree further north TIPVU IFMQ. Follow Tim. (DAVID AKROYD)

We'll say goodbye to *The Boggit* but stay with Mat, who is similarly stuck near the beginning of *The Very Big Cave Adventure*. Drop all the treasures in the welly house. Unlock the grating with the keys and then down. MJHIU the lamp to explore the caves. (JOHN WILSON)

Rebel Planet is very much the flavour of the moment, so let's have a look at two SIGNSTUMPS on this Adventuresoft blockbuster.

TONY CAMERON wonders where he can find the fork and the crystal to open up the doors to the university, while DEAN KERR is cautiously eyeing the coffee machine at the same institution.

In the passages of the museum you'll find the crystal and unlocking the alcove in the basement of the hotel will reveal the fork. It is inadvisable to drink the coffee (read the mirror).

Thanks to ALEX NG sending in a *Claymorgue Castle* solution I can answer some questions from GERARD CAMPBELL. Gerard lists his problems as follows:
'1 How do I dry the towel?
2 How do I kill or get past the dragon?
3 How do I get the can?
4 Can I get down from the loft without using the yoko spell?'

Here's how:
1 Squeeze the towel and dry it.
2 Examine the dragon. CMPX the dust.
3 UISPX the bricks at the DBM. GO W, then GO DRAWBRIDGE. Get the can.
4 Climb the chandelier and cast the light-square spell. UISPX the DSBUF and GO LOFT.

It's that *Dracula* problem again. Part Two has DANIEL NORRIS wondering if he's fallen off the end of the program – he's left thundering into the mountains for hours, not getting anywhere.

Look around and you will see a woman. MPPL into her face. MPPL into her FZFT. You will now enter a trance. When you awaken you will only have a few inputs so DMPTF FZFT or UVSO IFBE. The woman will give you a crucifix. XFBS JU, XBJU, then board the other coach. (DAVID EDWARDS)

CRAIG BURTON would like a complete solution to *The Helm*, or failing that the answer to two particularly tricky points:
1 where to find the spectacles;
2 how to use them to get the needle.

The answers:
1 Drop the stones to cross the river and go north to take the spectacles;
2 You must have all the necessary items before going west at the waterfall. In the hayfield, use the spectacles to burn the haystack and reveal the needle.

And DONALD MACKAY is wondering what's so wrong with a stone helm in the same game. A stone helm is not very impressive, so take the helm and JOTFSU EJBNPOE to form the Helm Of Immortality. It's impossible to return the helm the way you came.

BILL NEWTON obviously moves in glamorous circles – he's stuck in *Hampstead* working on *The Fourth Protocol*. Well, perhaps I exaggerate a little as he hasn't settled in *Hampstead* quite yet. Let's see what the trouble is:

'I have tried my hand at *Hampstead* and enjoy it a lot but cannot get anything from the man on the train.'

You meet Justin Perrier on the train. Give him the MBUIF, retaining CSBDLFU, and XFBS the tie he gives you. (STEPHEN ELLIS)

'I am also stuck getting anywhere on Part II (*The Bomb*) of *The Fourth Protocol*, in particular the code for the second lift in this part. We completed the first and the answer given allows you to proceed onto Part II. It is the lift code and is ASPEN which then lets you out of your building to join the MI6 from the MI5. However, to get into your office in the MI6 building you need to use another lift with another code and try as we may for several months we seem to have mapped the whole of London but can't get anywhere because we can't find this code.'

To get past the guard, use ID, go E and a man will give you a small note which reads 'In Xanadu Did Kublai Khan A Stately Pleasure'. If you number each letter – ie I = 1, N= 2, X= 3, etc. Then take the code ASPEN and find which number corresponds to each letter. Therefore the code is 4/24/31/28/2. Go to the corridor and look. You will be asked to input the code. (COLIN DORRANCE)

Also trying to attain *Hampstead* is ADRIAN TOON, who can't
1 open the filing cabinet;
2 get any money from the job;
3 meet Pippa.
1 GPSDF DBCJOFU with screwdriver. Examine DBCJOFU. (PHILIP WALKER)
2 Find the estate agent and buy the cottage with the ESBGU you get from voting option 3.
3 Go to the eastern end of Oxford Street. Go SE,S,S,S,E,SE. If you are wearing your TVJU and UJF,



and have the deeds, you can get Pippa. (2 and 3 from NEIL MCCABE)

An *Aftershock* quickie rounds off this month. CHRIS HILL wants to know what to do when he gets to Silas King's house. If I've got the right derelict house, you go upstairs and support the stairs with the beam.

I've run out of time and space this month – remember, if your query wasn't featured, it may be answered next month.

If your favourite game isn't getting any mentions in SIGNSTUMPS it could be that I haven't got the solution in my files. So even if SUPERHERO fame is beyond you, how about sending in a solution? You can see your name in print whenever your tips are used. As for questions on games, well, that's what SIGNSTUMPS is all about so send in your worst to:

SIGNSTUMPS
PO BOX 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB



COMPELLING SPELLING

Dear Derek
With reference to the letter from Eamon Scanlon in the June issue of CRASH – he has found 16 *Price Of Magik* spells when there are in fact 18. The two he is missing are:

1. **ESP, which has the crystal ball as its focus, and**
2. **DED, which has the wheel as its focus.**

In answer to Eamon's plea for help:

1. **To get through the door in the stone room**
   - **A CAST ESP EAST to see beyond the door and see the dead idol**
   - **B CAST BOM at the idol**
   - **C CAST ESP again and CAST HYP to control the idol**
   - **D CAST ESP again and type 'IDOL, OPEN DOOR'**

   It is then possible to travel eastwards.
2. **The answer to the riddle is FEAR and does not need to be used till asked for. This occurs at a point beyond the door in the stone room.**
3. **I don't know of any reason to go past the dark dead end.**
4. **There is no need to open the sarcophagus.**

R C MORTON, South Humberside

THAT'S MY GAME!

Dear Derek
I was delighted and not a little surprised to see a colourful and detailed map of my adventure *Underworld – The Village* in the June edition of CRASH.

However, there are a few points which, being either incorrect or not present, need clarifying.

1. **Some directions in the Bank are incorrect, and a key location containing a treasure is missing.**
2. **The Crown does not appear after visiting the Crypt as stated, but after another act has been performed.**
3. **There are no dead ends in the Catacombs.**
4. **The directions inside the World War II bunker are incorrect and therefore most misleading. Following the route John Barrie has suggested would most certainly get you blown up!**
5. **Obviously, only locations which are important have been drawn. However, several have been missed out which could mislead an adventurer.**
6. **Though the map is detailed, John hasn't made it clear what to do with all the items, or their various uses.**

The above apart, John Barrie's map is excellently conceived and drawn (somewhat better, in fact, than the one I worked from!). I would dearly love to know just how long it took him to complete my adventure, which was written in 1984 and released by Orpheus.

KEITH A PARROCK, Middlesex

You don't give much away, I'll give you that!

DB

CLOSED BOOK

Dear Derek
Firstly I would like to thank you for the *Book Of The Dead* review in the June CRASH. I felt it was a very fair and accurate assessment of the game, and I am pleased that you enjoyed playing it.

However, I must take issue with you on the *Book Of The Dead* 'complete solution' you also printed. We sent you the game solution to help you when reviewing the product, not to make it public. Many people will not feel it worthwhile to buy the game since they know how to solve it. Okay, we wouldn't have minded if you'd printed a solution someone had sent in, but doing it before anyone has had a chance to play it is, I feel, unhelpful.

MARK DAVIES, The Essential Myth

Yes, Mark, I was equally as flabbergasted at the published solution for your game (even if it was just a quarter as you say) – in the very same issue as the review! The responsibility for this heinous crime lies up in a lofty turret within CRASH Towers. The culprit, an arcade-nervous joys-tickwocky, is at this very moment scurrying about in fear of having its interface surgically removed.

But have a heart – this frightened creature knows nothing of the dubious joys of adventuring, and genuinely thought such a solution would put poor adventurers out of their misery.

And as it was I who sent the solution down to the Towers (ostensibly to help Mr Photographer through the intricacies of the game) I must take the blame, and not only apologise for the full solutions in that issue but also promise to be more discreet with solutions in the future, be they from a software house or a member of the public.

DB

I haven't forgotten David Salter's epic *GAC* letter – by next month it'll be a classic . . . In the meantime, David wins a well-deserved £20 worth of software. Keep your letters, postcards and sealed parchment scrolls coming to: Derek Brewster, SIGNPOST, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*.

S·U·P·E·R·H·E·R·O·E·S

There's been a super response to the call for more SUPERHEROES this time. From every walk of life, and for every game imaginable, there have been fearless souls who have boldly gone where no other adventurer had the heart to go – the very end of an adventure game. Let us begin with the big Tolkien-inspired classic *Shadows Of Mordor*.

'I bought *Shadows Of Mordor* on 5 June, one day after its release, and by 7 June I had completed it. I think *Shadows Of Mordor* is one of the best adventure games I have ever played but it could have been longer or harder. The only thing I found wrong with it is the fact that it took a long time to load a saved game when I died. However, I enjoyed the game very much and have included the complete solution. I find it is better to only control Frodo as this makes things simpler. The first thing to do is to find Smeagol. Just wander round the first few locations and he should come to you. Ask Sam to give you the . . . .

And that's where we leave PAUL GODWIN's letter successfully claiming the title of *Shadows Of Mordor* SUPERHERO. He just pipped NEIL HARRISON, who received the following message on 7 June at 9.30pm, two-and-a-half hours after Paul: 'Well done! You now have a chance of saving your friend from the Dark Lord. Together you may yet be able to destroy the Ring and save Middle Earth.'

Dracula has always had a fatal attraction, but here we have three chaps who've gotten the better of the Count. That special superperson for this game and the *Dracula* SUPERHERO is DAVID EDWARDS, who completed the game by 27 March, beating SIMON MOPPETT (11 April) and J MEEDE (19 April) into second and third positions.

'I am writing to claim myself a SUPERHERO. I completed *The Pawn* on my Spectrum 128K at 9.10pm on 27 May 1987. The game doesn't actually finish, as you will see. The last 'new' location is as follows: 'You are in a strange room totally alien to the rest of the adventure. The walls and floor are covered in listing paper and a large fan blows cigarette ash onto the many computers and peripherals that inhabit this weird abode. As you enter the room, a bunch of bleary-eyed, extremely tired-looking programmers literally fall out of the door. One, looking particularly harassed, hands you a listing and says 'fix this will you? - we're off to the pub to celebrate someone finishing this game'.

'If you then type DEBUG, a different cursor is displayed and you can wander around the game without dying. It also displays all of the examinable objects in a room and in the laboratory it also mentions a tea chest, a jar, and a wooden box which aren't there in the normal game!'

And the final SUPERHERO for this month has brought a thaw to Incentive's *Winter Wonderland*. STEVEN HOUSE of Cumbria discovered it was time for spring on 12 June.

Excuse me, but are you doing anything from 25 – 27 September? You aren't? Well, howd'ya fancy joining CRASH and the rest of the software industry at . . .

THE 10th PERSONAL COMPUTER WORLD SHOW

GET IN FOR FREE!

The razzamatazz of THE show is soon going to be upon us all. The 10th PCW Show is to be held as usual in London, and Olympia's National Hall will change, overnight, from an empty and peaceful space into a seathing mass of sweaty bodies all fighting to get at the glittering stands.

It's hot, it's noisy, it's chaotic, it's got hamburgers, it's got the best atmosphere of any show, and we love every minute of it!

And you can be there too, at a price of course – UNLESS you're one of 50 winners of this competition, in which case you can get into this emporium of computer-generated happiness without having to pay a penny!

When you get there you can trot up to the Newsfield stand (number 3040) and pick up your free PCW Show programme (normally worth £3) in addition to a free copy of Newsfield's new magazine THE GAMES MACHINE (normally worth £1.25) – set to be launched at the show. And you can natter to everyone from CRASH who should be on the stand (unless they're on 'important business', ie propping up the bar).

There'll be hundreds of software and hardware companies showing off, or previewing, their wares – some of the new software on display will be available on the CRASH Sampler; a cassette stuck to the cover of our October issue. More of that next month. Back to the comp . . .

Little puzzle for you.

Last year ol' comps minion was sent round to the CLUB ROOM (bottom centre) to get sarnies, tea, coffee, buns, cake, bacon 'n' eggs, Mars Bars and saussie rolls for Aggie's breakfast (she's a growing girl y'know). So off he ran clutching a six bob note (somebody really should tell this guy . . .) and the shopping list. After bundling all the snacks into his arms he prepared for the big trek back to the Newsfield stand. But the show being packed to the limits, the wimpy one decided to fling a few ropes across the deep ravine (the space between the top and bottom floor to you) and go hand-over-hand back to the stand (far right-hand corner).

However, all the ropes got a bit tangled up – but one did lead to the stand. If you can discover which of the five it was then jot its letter down on a postcard along with your name, address and telephone number (if you have one) and stick it in the post box with this message written on the front: **PCW COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB.***

All entries must arrive before 25 August. Tickets will be despatched to the 50 winners well in time, and they may be used on any of the public days which are 25 to 27 September.

Crash Competition



The 10th Personal Computer World Show
23-27 SEPTEMBER 1987
OLYMPIA LONDON
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"A superlative piece of software. Slick in virtually every aspect, wholly original and immensely playable." ZZAP! 64
Screen Star
"The sound throughout is great. This is definitely one groovey game... Enough imagination has gone into it to make it different and still keep it immensely playable. Graphics are fab!"
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1987 PBM MAILBOX



I'm finally getting the hang of *Megalomania* (famous last words?), while on the motoring front I've had my little Spitfire back for several weeks and it's still in one piece. Amazing. It must be summertime . . .

ONE SMALL MAN GOES TO MARKET

THE PAST few weeks have been a busy time for several PBM companies. Ken Mulholland, joint owner of Time Patterns, tells me that the waiting list for the next game of *StarGlobe* has topped 200 and is climbing steadily. He now warns you NOT to send any cash at first, and NOT to expect a prompt reply.

StarGlobe, a 3-D space-exploration game, recently closed down temporarily for its annual revamp – but now it's running again. The fifth game is scheduled for a September launch.

At first this will be for new players only (experienced players should get the chance to join next year, once newbies have got to grips with the game – NOBODY gets an advantage in *StarGlobe*, says Ken).

Meanwhile, *StarGlobe Three* and *StarGlobe Four* have begun to recover from the recent epidemic of Information Module-swapping. Let's hope this doesn't happen in *StarGlobe Five*. (Ken and Carol of Time Patterns commented that nobody enjoys running a game in which half the people are cheating rather than playing. Too true.)

Are there enough PBM games? Ken made another good point. Demand for PBM games is rising rapidly, he said. If *StarGlobe* is anything to go by, there may be two people after every place in a PBM game!

PBM games fall into two major categories (if one discounts the well-established noncommercial amateur games). There are established, reliable companies, alongside fresh producers – often people with little PBM experience. There's always been the 'small man in the market', but this is a new breed.

Ken's worrying point was: do they know just what they're committing themselves to when launching games and charging high fees to play? The well-known companies may promise a game in January and launch it in August, but at least one can have some faith in the producer when sending that postal order off on its one-way journey.

Elsewhere in the field, Jade Games have launched a new game to be run alongside *Shattered World* (CRASH reviewers report next month!). The new game, *The Knights Of The Avalon*, is a fantasy game. The aim is to build an empire through clever use of 'trade, colonisation, politics, religion and conquest'. A cheap game this, weighing in at 70p a round for UK players (£1 for others) with a free startup. Jade's address is *PO Box 54, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 0NA*.

I'll watch the progress of this game with interest – it may prove an alternative to *It's A Crime!*. There again, it may do the belly flop.

Those of you who have been begging for details of American football PBM games (arghh!) may be pleased to see at least two such games on the market. The best-established is *Gameplan* (write to Sloth Enterprises at *PO Box 82, Southampton SO9 7FG* – and remember that all-important SAE).

An alternative might be SEP's football game, with no apparent name! It's pretty pricy, and is run from *PO Box 12, Eccles, Manchester M30 7BP*. The rulebook was nicely written . . . but it might be wise to give SEP a month or two to establish themselves before getting into the game.

ONE TROLL AND HIS VULTURE

This is an unusual game. We are talking different here.

70 moon trolls live on an island covered with 400 troll holes (displayed cunningly as circles on the map issued with the starter package).

You control a troll and his only friend, a vulture, with the aim of – basically – doing well. You can develop your character's attributes through 14 commands, which often lead to amusing replies (as in *It's A Crime!*).

A couple of CRASH reviewers have plunged into the world of *Trolls Bottom*, and we should hear from them in a couple of months.

It's fairly cheap, with startups costing £3 including the rules, map, and two free turns. Later turn costs vary between 90p and £1.35, depending on what orders you make. The rulebook is impressive, well done, and mildly amusing.

Write to **Project Basilisk**, *PO Box 24, Sheerness, Kent*, and don't forget to mention CRASH.

The whole concept is very silly, and well worth a try if you're sick of global warfare!

IT IS. ARE YOU?

Here's an oddity that turned up in one of my mailbags: a Scottish collaboration of three zines (*Moronica Ripsnore*, *Tome Of Horrors* and *Utter Drivel* – yes, they ARE real names) to produce one high-quality zine bearing all three names and subtitled '. . . SOMETHING WONDERFUL'. It is. Quite.

The 60-page zine is based on role-playing games, incorporating bits on PBM and slices of humour as well as serious articles on *AEs*, the ins and outs of RPG rules systems, and other bumph; there are some wonderfully funny chapters.

It's a good buy for 80p plus an 18p A5 SAE from **Gordon W McLennan**, *36 Solway Place, Muirhead, Troon KA10 7EJ*.

CLUB HAS MEETINGS SHOCK

THIS IS something I never believed I'd end up doing – plugging a club for postal gamers. I've always assumed such things to be a bit of a 'thank you for your fiver subscription, here is this quarter's newsletter and your free badge' rip-off.

But the **National Gaming Club** seems to offer more for your money. It's aimed at FRP, RPG and PBM players on a more amateur basis than most groups. The club has meetings and a nicely-written little magazine which could be a good place to launch a game. Almost as good as CRASH, in fact . . .

For further details, send an SAE to the National Gaming Club at *PO Box 54, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 0NA*. (Yup, Jade Games again!)

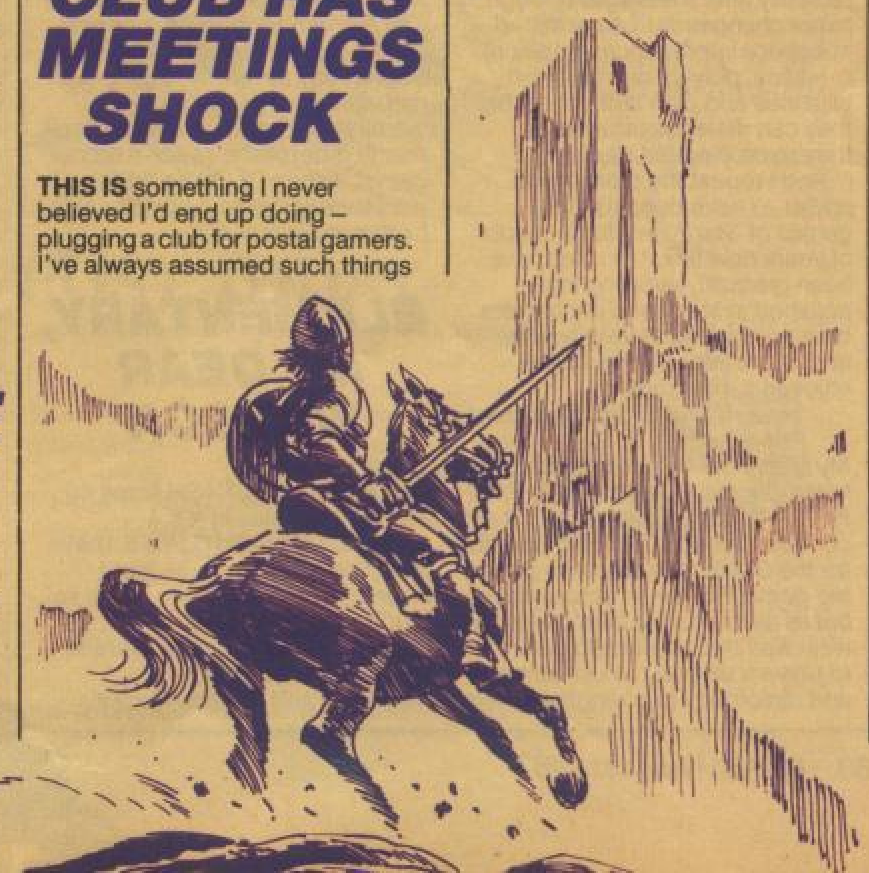
STARGLOBES SHUT

Time Patterns have closed down *Starglobes One* and *Two*. Awards and things are planned for the survivors (I wish I'd stayed in the game for a few months longer!), and those who wish can enter *Starglobe Five* as Active Aliens – an entirely new concept for the game.

The waiting list for *Starglobe 5* has been started, and startup is by approval only. This should be a good game, but they probably won't give me a place . . .

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO STARSHIP COMMANDER?

GOOD QUESTION. I haven't the foggiest. I believe the playtest is over. Perhaps Mitregames would let me know how the project is going along . . .



▶

PBM FORUM . . .

UP A GM TREE

Dear Brendon
I had to write in to the PBM MAILBOX to flatly contradict your answer to Mr Harden's letter in the July issue of CRASH. In fact, I want to oppose both your opinions.

I have been running an amateur PBM game for a couple of years now – *StarPower*, which includes both of the features which you object to, and which Mr Harden reckons are his innovations.

Firstly, players do not know which game of *StarPower* they are in. I have designed the game along the lines of a spiral-armed galaxy, and players are only told which galactic arm they are in, and not which game. Hence, at first they can only send messages into other galactic arms, and not direct them at particular people. Similarly, when they encounter other aliens in the galaxy, they will only learn of the alien name, and not if they are player-controlled or GM-controlled.

This does work – I've had great pleasure in running a game in which three people who knew each other very well were in the same game, but didn't know it. Even when the aliens met in the game, they still weren't aware, since I take great care over information-transfer.

This leads on to my second point – GM-controlled information. Because players cannot communicate directly (they don't know who else is in the game!) they must send messages through Galactic Control – the GM!

This keeps the GM well-informed about player alliances and so on – the GM is even entitled to participate by means of GM-controlled races in the galaxy. It DOES NOT entitle the GM to radically alter messages (though minor changes can be permitted – subspace interference and so on).

Hence, players can still form alliances and plan ambushes, but they can never be totally sure they're on the right track.

And I repeat the point made earlier – I have been running games of *StarPower* for a couple of years now (and the rules have been gradually evolving into a polished system) and my players have all enjoyed the experience and, more importantly, I have enjoyed it even more.

David Brain, Liverpool

My reply to Malcolm Harden's letter, printed in last month's PBM FORUM, has provoked a lot of correspondence. Malcolm called for the GM to take an active part in the game, not as an actual player but as an interfering third party. My view was that this would be unfair to players who like to use strategy and diplomacy to strengthen their positions. Malcolm's idea was that the GM should act as a kind of informer, letting people know if they were about to fall victim to a surprise attack, for example – which I believe would destroy the game from the strategist's point of view.

David's use of GM interaction is different – it's a fairer system of mild GM action using existing game entities, instead of a godlike party from outside the game environment breaking up alliances by GM-created word of mouth. (I'd like to repeat my view that any alliance-splitting should be caused by an enemy through clever diplomacy, not by a GM through boredom.)

David's system of interplayer communication is a novel one – perhaps you could send me the rulebook and some sample turns to ponder over, David?

In the meantime, more views are welcomed, and to give David's StarPower *a fling write to* DB StarPower, 9 Barnhill Road, Liverpool L15 5BE. *The game is run on an amateur basis so startups are first come, first served. It costs only two SAEs per two-week turnaround. Be sure to send an SAE when you first write to David!*

BK

MITRE THAN THE SWORD

Dear Brendon
Could you please tell me if Mitre Games is still running, and if so what sort of games it offers?
Jason Oates, 3rd ARMD DIT TPT RGT

Mitre Games can be contacted at 189 Balham High Road, London SW12, and currently offers Global Supremacy *(an expensive megagame of global warfare),* Midgard *(strategy/diplomacy),* Starmaster *(a sci-fi battle game),* Tribes Of Crane *(tribal warfare/exploration) and* Starship Commander *(sci-fi).*

BK

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON

Dear Brendon
Like A Watson (CRASH Issue 40, May 1987), I play in *It's A Crime!* Game 4 and Game 6. I have found no problems with input errors – if he dislikes the game so much, why play?

Could you print the addresses for *St Valentine's Day Massacre* and Andrew Rosey's Spectrum-based turf-mapper program for *It's A Crime!*? Thanx!
Neil Woodward, Pattingham, Wolverhampton

St Val's: *Rampage Games, 37 Beechwood, Woodlesford, Leeds, LS26 8PQ (send an SAE)*

Andrew Rosey: 68 Milward Road, Hastings, East Sussex (sorry I forgot this one in Issue 40!)

BK

THE DENT IS A CLONELY GAMER

Dear Brendon
I was very happily playing *Arcadia* when the news dropped on my doormat. The game had closed. 'Drat,' I thought. I was really enjoying the diplomacy side of the game, I had taken an enemy city and my opponent was preparing to return my attack. It was decision time for our allies – who should they support? KJC solved all our problems . . .

So I looked around for something similar to play. I decided to try *Earthwood*, seeing as it was so close to *Arcadia* (according to KJC). The startup pack arrived and I set out to study the rulebook. Yes, it does have similarities to *Arcadia*, but it appears to be more complex.

Both games have a similar theme, both have dragons, both have spies – but does this mean the designer of draughts can close down the manufacturer of chess simply because both are played on a similar board, the objective in both is to capture your opponent's pieces, and both have kings? No, it doesn't.

To invent a totally new game is almost impossible. After all, '*Jet Set Willy* clone' has become a computer-world catch phrase – how can PBM games be entirely different? Many game-designers pinch an idea from here, a routine from there. It is the way the world works.

By the way, isn't the *Earthwood* map a disappointment after the wonderful *Arcadia* one?
John Dent, Swanscombe, Kent

There are two sides to the argument. It shouldn't be TOO difficult to make PBM games differ. There are only so many things one can do with a computer's limited memory and graphics ability, but think of the opportunities a book of stamps opens up . . .

BK

SCENE OF THE CRIME

Dear Brendon
I'm sorry this is very late – but could you please send me your free startup package for *It's A Crime!* if you have any left? If not, then would you please be kind enough to forward this letter to KJC Games?
Richard Scrivens, Bramshott, Liphook

All future Crime! *enquiries should be sent direct to KGC Games (PO Box 11, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancashire FY5 2UL). Please. New readers may be interested to note that the offer was made exactly one year ago! Oh well, better late than never – it's been forwarded, Richard.*

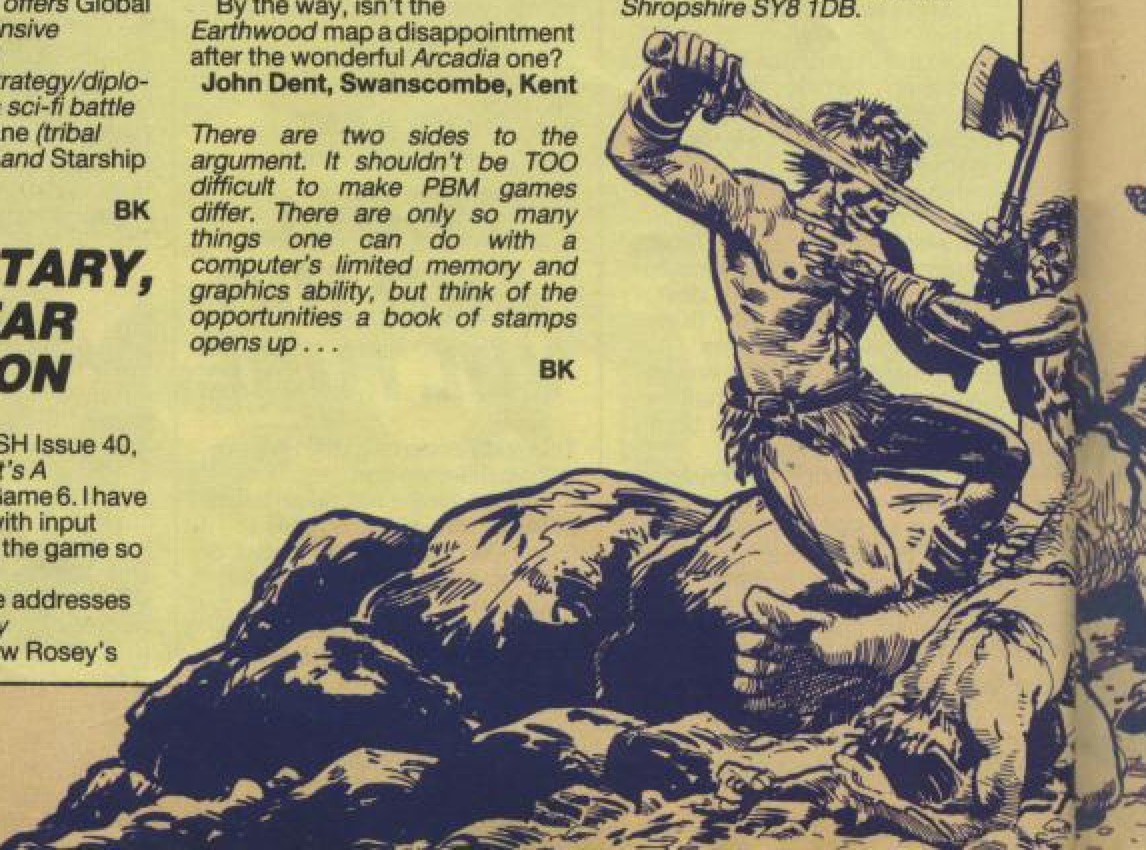
BK

DON'T FORGET – RATE THOSE GAMES

IF YOU send any mail to the PBM MAILBOX, then tell me about the games in which you play. The best way to do this is to use the new MAILBOX Marking System. Mark your games out of 100 in the following categories:

GM QUALITY – how good is the game's GM?
DIPLOMACY – how important is good diplomacy in the game?
RULEBOOK – how comprehensive and clear is the rulebook?
COMPLEXITY – how complicated is the game?

Next month I'll collate all your figures, so get them in soon! Thanks to everyone who's written in with comments recently – sorry we don't have space to print everything. Perhaps your next letter . . . Send them off to the usual address: **PBM FORUM, CRASH,** *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*



LUDLOW DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY SHROPSHIRE

DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY has been running for some time now, and seems to be a popular part of PBM MAILBOX (especially when I manage to update it . . .). The idea is to give players contacts in their own games, and perhaps to help you discover what a game you fancy is like. What better way to find out than to write to a current player or two?

That said, some companies prefer not to be mentioned here (a few people have been using the system to cheat rather than to gradually learn and gain pen friends – tsk tsk tsk!), so if not all the games you play in are listed DON'T PANIC. It's the work of the Crash Diplomatic Directory Censorship Minion (me).

If you'd like your name, address, and game details printed here, send me a postcard: **BRENDON KAVANAGH'S PBM DIRECTORY, CRASH, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*.**

★068 Alan Halliday
2 Langley Drive, Handforth, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 3BQ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 76; Super Vorcon Wars 89*

★069 Gary Johnston
Village Lodge, Tyninghame, Dunbar, East Lothian EH42 1XL
GAMES: *Casus Belli 49; Crasimoff's World (The Highlander* but of course - BK*); Kickabout; It's A Crime! (The Wongs)*

★070 Colin Walsham
62 Leighwood Avenue, Leigh On Sea, Essex SS9 4LG
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 11 (Arkenoids)*

★071 John Kitts
29 Queens Avenue, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 2NS
GAMES: *Casus Belli 18 (Player 4); Crisis 15 (Columbia)*

★072 R Smith
2 Muriel Street, Bulwell, Nottingham N66 8FS
GAMES: *It's a Crime! 10 (Rabbits Of Fiver – Gang 726); Casus Belli 20 (Player 8)*

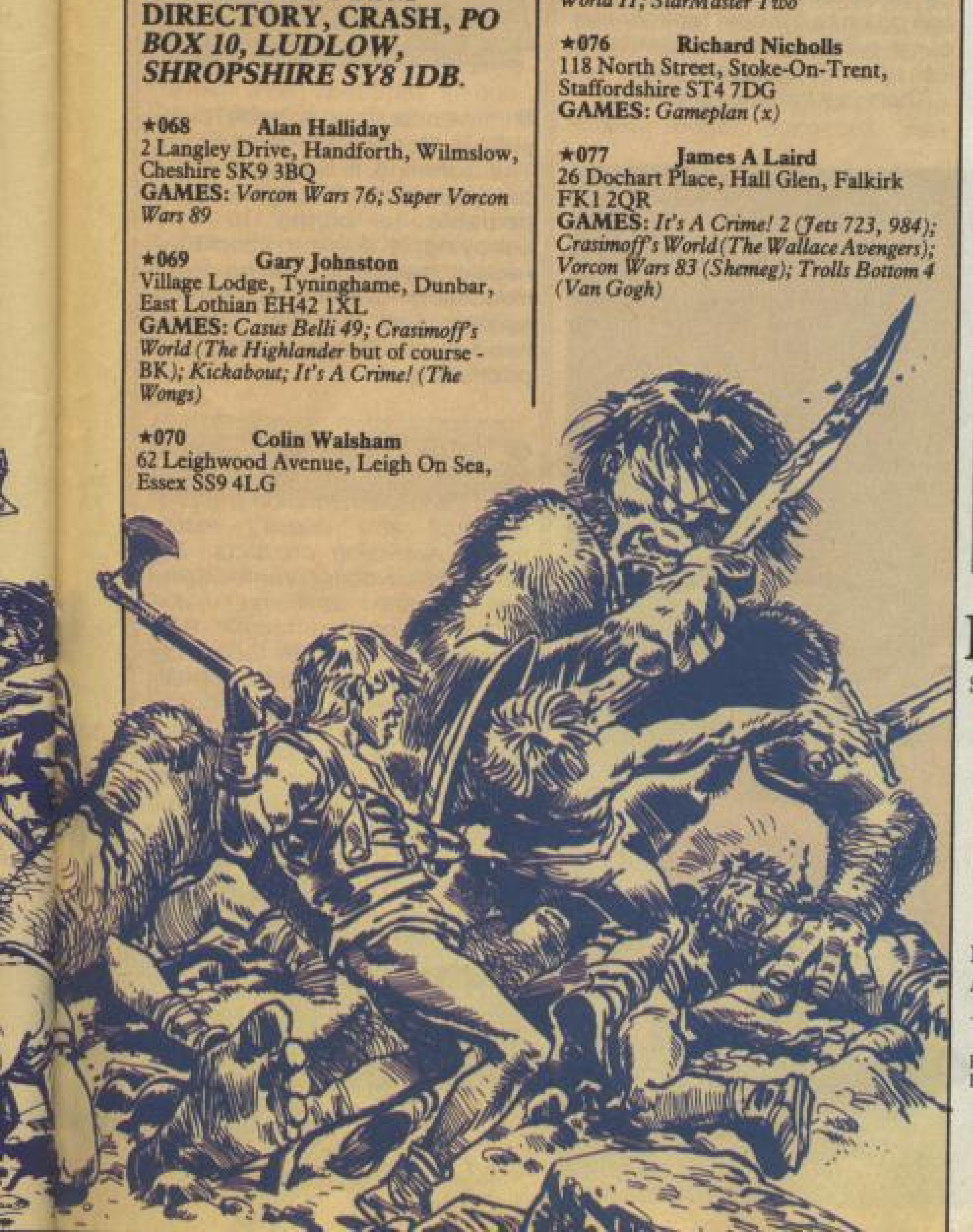
★073 Dave Brennan
4 The Poplars, Biddick, Washington, Tyne And Wear NE38 7DR
GAMES: *Rebound; It's A Goal; Kick Off; Rags To Riches (Elite); Boothies Bugle; Teamwork; It's A Fix; Slap Shot; Saturnalia* (one or two amateur zine games there, methinx - BK)

★074 Mark Foster
186 Falkland Road, Greatfield Estate, Hull HU9 5EY
GAMES: *Super Vorcon Wars 96 (Frugor); It's A Crime! 8 (City Wreckers)*

★075 John Dent
68 Sun Road, Swanscombe, Kent DA10 0BJ
GAMES: *Earthwood 67; It's A Crime! 10; Capitol Midgard; Orion's Finger; Shattered World II; StarMaster Two*

★076 Richard Nicholls
118 North Street, Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 7DG
GAMES: *Gameplan (x)*

★077 James A Laird
26 Dochart Place, Hall Glen, Falkirk FK1 2QR
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 2 (Jets 723, 984); Crasimoff's World (The Wallace Avengers); Vorcon Wars 83 (Shemeg); Trolls Bottom 4 (Van Gogh)*



A CRASH Splash

TRANS-ATLANTIC BALLOON CHALLENGE

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Maxwell Technology**

Recently obsessed with inflatable objects, Richard Branson attempts to cross the Atlantic in a balloon. The screen is divided horizontally with Branson's *Virgin Atlantic Flyer* occupying the upper airspace and his rival the lower.

Accompanying each craft is a controllable eagle, with sonic-beam eyes. Using these weapons the tame eagle can destroy aircraft and the pots of paint and puncture bombs which they drop and which can cause the balloon to lose height. And contact with the large fire-belching missile destroys the balloon and its crew.

But each enemy destroyed by your eagle's beam earns you points.

And each eagle can leave its own balloon, travel to the other playing area and there wreak havoc upon your rival's aeronautical ambitions.

However, these birds have limited energy, reduced by every wing flap and by contact with a rival's sonic beam.

The altitude of a balloon can be controlled using a burner icon. But activating this uses valuable fuel, and if fuel falls to zero the balloon falls and the intrepid airmen are dunked like biscuits in the North Atlantic.

The balloon can also gain height in the summer sun's warmth, but likewise drops seaward when the darkness of night descends.

Children borne by a surfeit of balloons are occasionally carried upward. Shooting these levitating brats incurs penalties, but the eagle can rescue them for big bonuses.

To add to Branson's pickle, rival eagles can push the Virgin balloon off its planned course.

There is a two-player option.

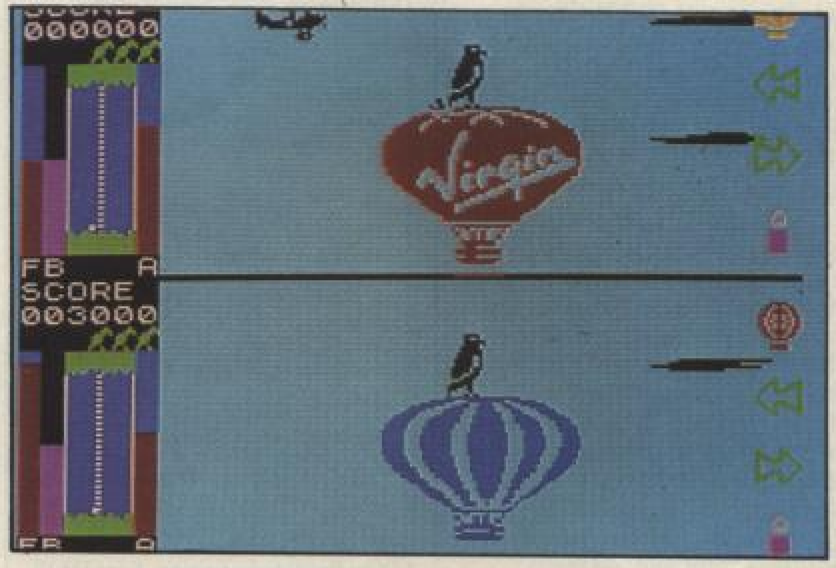
CRITICISM

● **" Virgin seem to spend most of their time writing games without much playability, just to promote Richard Branson's attempts to get in the record books. Most normal CRASH readers will soon get bored of this "**

NICK

● *" You'd have thought that after the mediocre boat-race game (Virgin Atlantic Challenge Game, CRASH Issue 32) the folks at Virgin would have come up with something better – but they don't seemed to have learned from their mistakes. This balloon game is even more tedious and irrelevant than its predecessor. What graphics do appear are good, which goes to show that if they'd spent more time on the game it could have been a decent product. As it is* Trans-Atlantic Balloon Challenge *has very little content,*

► **Graceful birds alight on your balloon, the reassuring hum of a distant aeroplane . . . a moment of tranquil repose in** *Trans-Atlantic Balloon Challenge*



WONDER BOY

Producer: **Activision**
Retail Price: **£9.99**

Wonder Boy's minuscule heart-throb Tina is kidnapped by the evil King. What can a boy do but rescue this distressed damsel?

King (King, you understand, not *a* king) holds the slight Tina in a far distant world separated from our hero by seven territories; each is divided into four lands and each of these is divided into four areas.

Wonder Boy passes through scenically scrolling woodlands, platforms suspended above seas and totem-pole alleys, and jumps over obstacles.

But should Wonder Boy lay a chubby cherubic limb upon an advancing mollusc, a killer frog or stumbling midget mannequin, then he shuffles one of his four mortal coils.

To help him in his unwholesome quest, Wonder Boy can gather helpful items by making like an omelette chef and cracking open the large eggs that occasionally lie upon his path. From these, useful objects such as skateboards, temporarily protective fairies and stone axes appear. The axes can lay low troublesome beasts, and earn Wonder Boy points.



► **And all because the lady loves Milk Tray . . .** *Wonder Boy*

But even Wonder Boy needs food, and so our little diapered dynamo collects nourishment by touching the carrots, apples and fruit bunches he finds upon the way. His vitality is replenished when he gets through a land, anyway.

When the last land of a territory is reached, a deranged ogre must be defeated before Wonder Boy can go on to the next territory and come a little closer to planting a kiss upon his treasured girl.

There is a two-player option.

CRITICISM

● **" Wonder Boy is quite playable, but technically uninspiring. The scrolling is awful, and the tune, good at first, goes from bearable to boring to very annoying; it doesn't keep to a regular rhythm, but slows down noticeably when the screen scrolls. And the dull screens need colour. Disappointing, and poor value. "**

MIKE

● *" The game itself, similar to* Super Mario Brothers, *isn't bad – but the implementation is unprofessional and doesn't match recent Activision products. The action on the monochrome display can become confusing – the character outlines aren't bold enough to distinguish them from the background. Add to that the jerky character-scrolling, and you've got a product that won't excite anyone. "*

RICKY



though games of this genre need holding power. It's much more fun to follow Branson's ballooning on the telly than to play the game. "

PAUL

● " Yawn! As if the event itself hadn't been overhyped to the point of internal collapse, then the game itself has. Is *this* what all the adverts are trying to sell? The graphics are poor, and the colour choices are appalling. Tedium sets in after about two minutes (a new world record, surely!). "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, SPACE fire
Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: vivid
Graphics: poor
Sound: annoying spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: transatlantic scrolling
General rating: an improbable and unplayable shoot-'em-up

Presentation	60%
Graphics	44%
Playability	20%
Addictive qualities	21%
Overall	22%

● " Let's face it: the arcade game was pretty, but extremely tedious. And the cuteness has been lost in the transition to the merely monochrome Spectrum screen. The character-scrolling is jerky and the collision-detection is inaccurate; both mistakes could have been avoided. But despite the bad structure I found the concept of *Wonder Boy* fairly addictive, and the two-player option is competitive. It *could* have been good, but *Wonder Boy* is a sternutatory game. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, P right, Q to jump, any bottom-row key for other activities
Joysticks: Sinclair, Kempston
Use of colour: mono
Graphics: poor; badly-defined sprites
Sound: annoying tune on the 128
Skill levels: one
General rating: disappointing conversion from a good arcade original

Presentation	56%
Graphics	48%
Playability	44%
Addictive qualities	42%
Overall	43%

BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Producer: **39 Steps**
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Authors: **Paul Smith and Steve Howard**

Tough luck. Night has fallen on Castle Frankenstein and its grounds. Within this foreboding stronghold lies an inactive Frankie, the organless monster of an evil creator, awaiting revival.

MIKE

" The appeal of Bride Of Frankenstein **wears off soon. It has good presentation, and quite pleasant graphics (most of the characters are amusingly drawn). But it lacks content. And most annoying is the way in which, on some screens, you leave by the top exit and emerge in the next screen's top exit – an unprofessional and disorientating effect. Though there are some good ideas, such as the heartbeat meter,** Bride Of Frankenstein **could have been much better. "**

To make this imperfect brainchild whole, you must collect his essential parts – lungs, kidneys, liver, heart and brain.

The castle consists of 60 flick-screen rooms, dungeons, corridors, laboratories and courtyards. Wandering through its terrifying interior reduces energy levels, shown as elixir in a bottle which you must refill.

And within these nightmarish confines lurk floating ghosts, ghouls and skeletal monstrosities. Contact with these evil entities increases your thumping cardiac rate, shown by the pulsing heart at the bottom right of the screen – and you risk terminal heart failure.

Some doors are locked; there are seven different keys hung upon the castle walls, though. A spade and pickaxe can be found and used for excavating graves, and a lamp provides illumination for exploring darker areas.

Further complications arise in the castle's dungeons where distraught prisoners beg for release, and in the tower where electrical repairs may be required before Frankie can be stimulated into action.

NICK

" It's the middle of the night, the lightning is raging outside, and you're all alone. Can you revive Frankie? I think this type of game, where you have to hunt around a building searching for keys to get into other rooms, went out years ago. The graphics are above average, though there's jerky animation. And the ghosts and ghouls don't move in set patterns but home in on you, so if you stay still for a couple of seconds you die, which makes it quite frustrating. "

PAUL

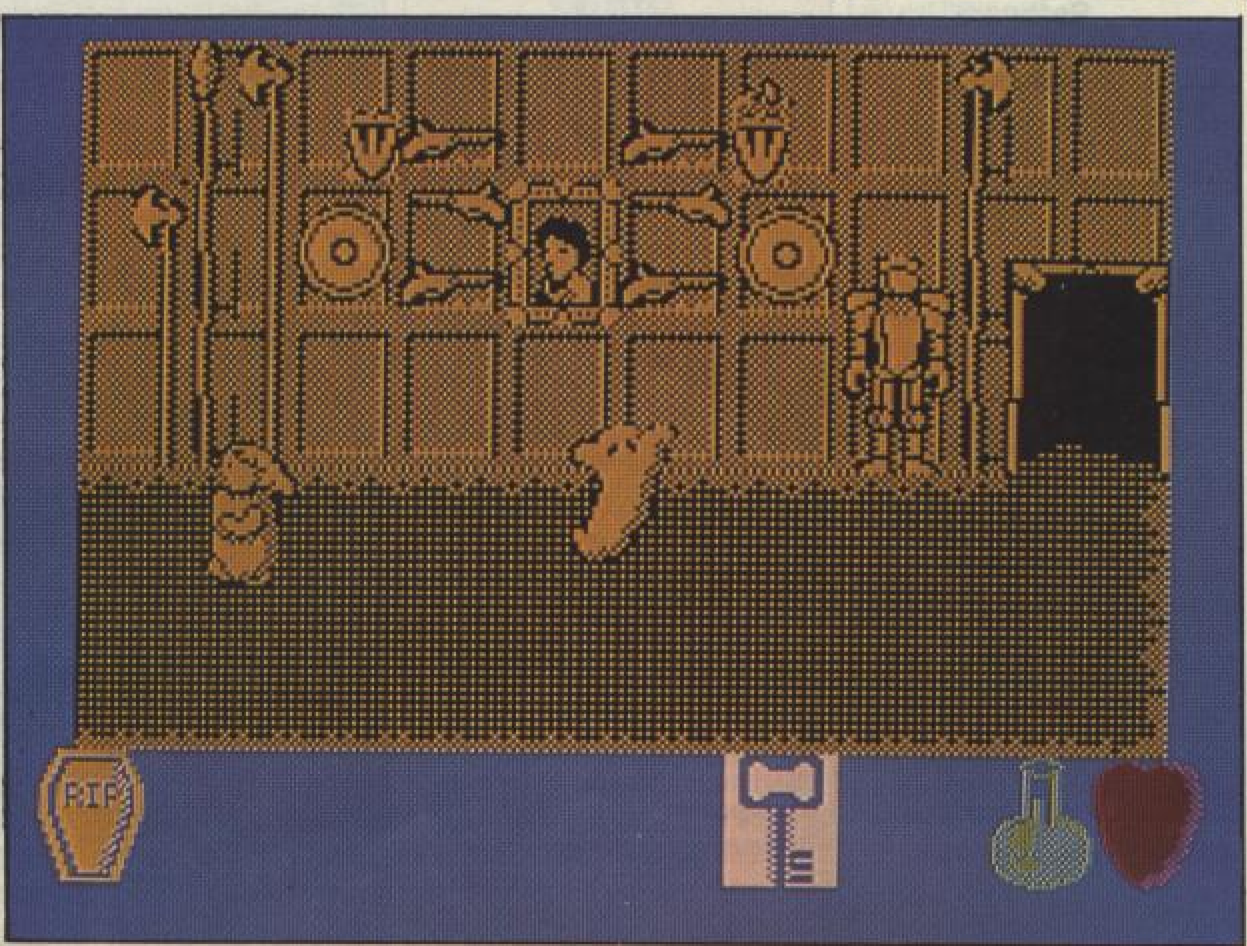
" Someone's actually done something original with a 3-D adventure game – the graphics in Bride Of Frankenstein **give the old theme a new dimension. Action is fast and accurate, but the game is slowed badly when lots of people appear on the screen. Some of the backgrounds are very detailed and help the atmosphere tremendously. My only gripe is the strange way the character flicks from location to location – it's very distracting and off-putting.** Bride Of Frankenstein **is out of the ordinary, and definitely worth considering. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, R right, Q back, A front, SPACE to pick up/swap/use objects, SPACE and O or SPACE and P to dig/axe
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: cute
Sound: spot FX, unattractive title tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: 60
General rating: good graphics and atmosphere, but uninteresting gameplay

Presentation	68%
Graphics	71%
Playability	51%
Addictive qualities	58%
Overall	59%

► **And on the left, the very lovely** *Bride Of Frankenstein*





NINJA HAMSTER

Producer: **CRL**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Colin Ajayi'Obe**

After many years abroad, Ninja Hamster returns to the village of his birth. But his birthplace has been overrun by Sinister Rat, Loony Lobster, Ninja Monkey, the Lizard Of Death and their nefarious crew of mean mammals, crazy crustaceans, belligerent bees and alligatorial alliterations.

Skilled in the ways of the ninja, our hero goes into battle, teeth unsheathed, claws like flick knives, paws full of muscular intensity.

This Rambo rodent meets each of the gang in turn, pitting his fighting skills against theirs. Ninja Hamster can kick high and low, duck, punch, and block and avoid opponent's blows.

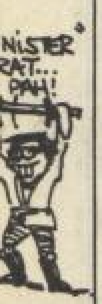
Every successful hit adds to Super Hamster's points and reduces the stamina of his opponents; some blows are more powerful than others. When either the hamster or his opponent runs out of energy, a bite is taken from a large apple at the top of the screen. If his opponent's Granny Smith is all gone, our hamster war-

NICK

" **Heeha, heeha, wha! Oops, sorry, must have been the Ninja Hamster coming out in me. We've had** Ninja Master, The Last Ninja **and even just** Ninja, **but this must be the ultimate name. The graphics are really well drawn and the colour is effective, despite some clash; the screen layout is very similar to the** Fist **games. And there's a good tune on the title screen. The only problem is that you have to load more code from the tape when you've killed two baddies. This is a highly addictive game, and I'll be buying it.** "



Level 25?! Foul play at work here, as Cameron takes on the role of ***Ninja Hamster***



BEN

" Barbarian **showed that there may be a few more goodies to scrape out of the fighting sims barrel – and** Ninja Hamster **is one of them, though its qualities are a little dubious. Joystick control is similar to the Fist games and** International Karate **so it's fairly easy, but if you prefer keys you'll have to spend a lot of time learning them (and grow another hand!). The game itself is a plain and straightforward beat-'em-up. No tactics are required, other than getting in as many hits as possible, so it gets quite boring on later levels.** "

PAUL

" Ninja Hamster **is yet another bash-and-beat-'em game. The graphics may be slightly more detailed and squatter than in other games of this genre, but that's a hindrance – you often can't see a thing that's going on. The armoury of moves is very small, and those that do exist are 'cutely' (yeergggh!!) animated.** Ninja Hamster **offers very little to do, and a weak atmosphere – I didn't have much fun bashing hell out of other little animals.** "

LEVIATHAN

Producer: **English Software**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Gareth Briggs**

Ripping through space in your fighter craft, you pass over three different panoramas – Moonscape, Cityscape and Greekscape – which float through the silent darkness on platforms of land. task: to rid each territory of the entities which infest it. (There's a time limit, of course.)

You can control your fighter's direction and altitude, negotiating the lunar domes, towers, radar devices, Greek statues and skyscrapers that project from each landscape's surface. Contact with any of these wipes out one of your four lives.

The fighter is equipped with limitless missiles, and three smart bombs which can take out any alien in the vicinity. For each alien destroyed, points are awarded, with an extra life earned for every 5,000 points.

Read-outs give the number of aliens remaining in a sector, the number left in the current attacking wave, and their type. All aliens are lethal when touched – but prompt evasive action can be taken by flipping the craft onto its back and reversing direction.

Different life forms have different flight paths and flying configurations, which makes their destruction more difficult. Two flashing directional arrows on the instrument console show the location of aliens.

Your craft has a limited supply of fuel; it can fill up by shooting approaching fuel cubes in the

BEN

" **As shoot-'em-ups go, this is a dead loss. The screen is very cluttered, so you can't really tell where your craft is (it's the same colour as everything else) or what's going on. The control method is unwieldy, and a lot of problems occur because the accelerate/decelerate controls are on the same keys as the up/down controls. I can't recommend** Leviathan. **It offers no challenge, because of its bad implementation – though it could have been the best** Zaxxon **lookalike yet.** "

NICK

" Leviathan **isn't amazingly exciting, and the loading system nearly always goes wrong! The background graphics are well-detailed, but when your ship flies over them you can't see where it's gone – a serious problem.** "

PAUL

" **The graphics are unquestionably the drawing point of** Leviathan. **The scrolling is very fast, and the landscapes are detailed, with good perspective. The trouble is, they suffer from the same problem as** Slap Fight **(page 20 this issue) – you usually can't see where or what the baddies are, because of the amount of detail. And as far as I can see** Leviathan **has nothing to do with ZZ Top. But it's the best** Zaxxon**-type game on the Spectrum; the competition is very dated. If you can overcome the playability problems, there's an addictive game here.** "

The good ship ***Leviathan*** **slides slinkily through space towards an encounter with destiny . . .**



rior is the victor and he can go on to meet the next of the ruthless villains. But at higher levels weapons such as maces cross the screen to cause greater problems for our hero . . .

When the last of the obnoxious bunch has been laid low, Ninja Hamster has saved the day and can end his days comfortably as someone's pet.

COMMENTS

Control keys: I left, O right, Q jump up, W jump forward, K flying kick, I&P block, A duck, P punch, P low kick (while ducking), S high kick, L middle kick, YOY?
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: adequate
Graphics: layout like every beat-'em-up, pretty characters which lose definition when fighting
Sound: title tune and spot FX
Skill levels: eight
Screens: eight
General rating: a cuddly little beat-'em-up

Presentation	77%
Graphics	70%
Playability	53%
Addictive qualities	64%
Overall	62%

space zones of each planetscape, or by landing on fuel-pod arrows in the Cityscape sector. Sound effects warn you when the craft needs a top-up.

According to the inlay, *Leviathan* was inspired by the ZZ Top video *Rough Boy*, which is set in a spaceship.

COMMENTS

Control keys: A left, S right, F up, D down, G fire; or cursor keys
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: good, ranging from detailed landscapes to simple designs – but sometimes confusingly complex
Sound: informative beeps on 48K, full music and effects on 128
Skill levels: one
Screens: three diagonally-scrolling play areas
General rating: a fairly enjoyable *Zaxxon*-type game with some visual problems

Presentation	69%
Graphics	61%
Playability	40%
Addictive qualities	48%
Overall	52%

CATCH 23

Producer: **Martech**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Ian McArdle and Malcolm Smith**

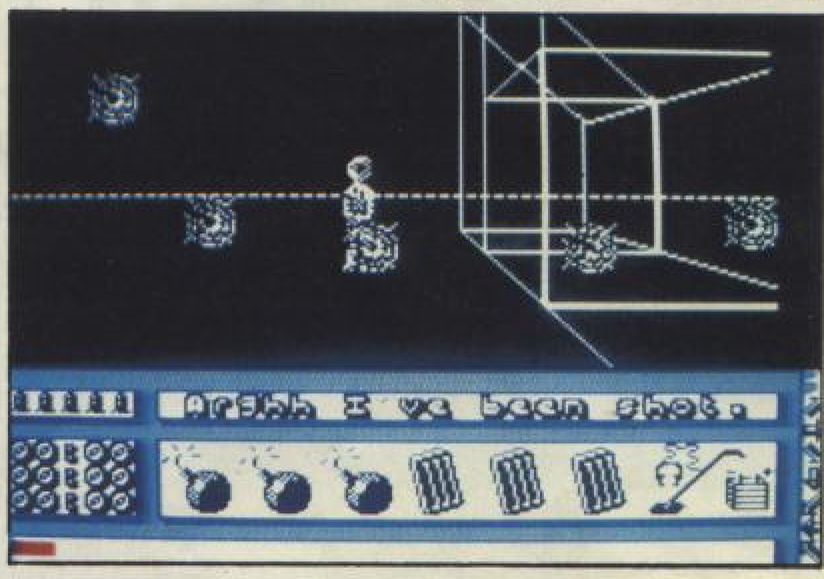
Intelligence reports have shown that the enemy's CK23 orbital interceptor is now operational! The CK23 is a masterpiece of machinery. It can take off and land like any ordinary aircraft, but it can escape the earth's gravitational pull and obtain geostationary orbit wherever it wishes.

RICKY

" Catch 23 is a marvellous piece of programming but a pretty unaddictive game. It has two very different elements – there's thoughtful exploration and mapping, and then suddenly a member of the opposition will pop up from nowhere and you're plunged into a quick-on-the-draw scene. This continual switching is irritating and, in practice, doesn't add any atmosphere. Catch 23 **may attract some attention, but most of it will be short-lived – the game didn't hold my interest for more than a few hours. "**

Staying in orbit for weeks, maybe months on end, it lies in wait till an enemy ship dares enter its territory. Then the CK23 blasts back into the atmosphere to intercept and destroy the intruder using highly sophisticated lasers and missiles.

► **Bullet holes pierce the visor as once more you pop your moon-boots**



Your mission is to find the site where CK23 is being developed, hidden in a top-secret military complex in the mountainous area of a small island. The heathland around the complex has been planted full of mines, deadly dangerous high-voltage electric fences and surveillance cameras. Armed military vehicles and foot patrols guard the base.

Once inside the complex, you must steal the plans, set a time-delay bomb in the nuclear reactor and get off the island as fast as possible. It's difficult, but there are a few items to help you in your 3-D vector-graphics mission.

MIKE

" Catch 23 has quite impressive graphics, but their appeal wears off after a few minutes. The high price is off-putting, and the game isn't exactly def. "

A special shuttle service was once built so the island's inhabitants could get from place to place faster. Only the main shuttle routes have been included in your map, but if you can find the connecting routes you can get around very quickly.

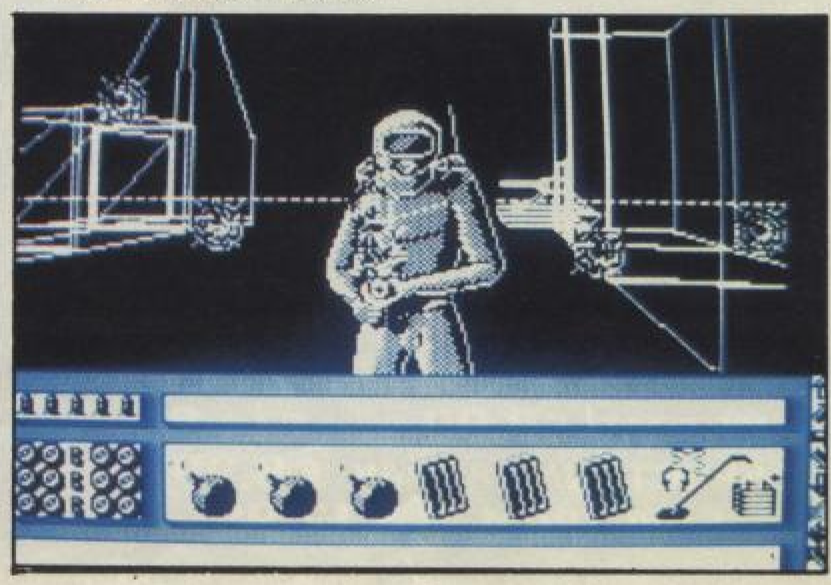
Dotted over the island are derelict houses and buildings. Many have been sealed up by the military forces, but some are still open. If a door is present, then the building is open to you. Inside the buildings are supplies of ammo, batteries for a mine detector and explosives for making bombs.

Included in the screen display is a dangerometer that goes up and down according to peril you're in; there are a host of surprises around every corner in *Catch 23* so it's vital you stay alert. Don't just sit there, grab that gun clip and go get them plans!

PAUL

" Lately, Martech seems to have come up with a different kind of game in every package it releases. This is a great, brave policy – but there are bound to be a few bad eggs. The idea of Catch 23 **is strong, but it's let down by some very slow-moving graphics (probably the computer's fault and not the programmers'). All the buildings are well-designed, and the atmosphere is involving – but** Catch 23 **lacks fast action. If you must get this to keep you busy till** Mercenary, **do it. But don't expect anything nearly as good. "**

► **You've been shot! And it's probably no less than you deserve, if you couldn't shoot him at that distance . . . nag, nag . . .**



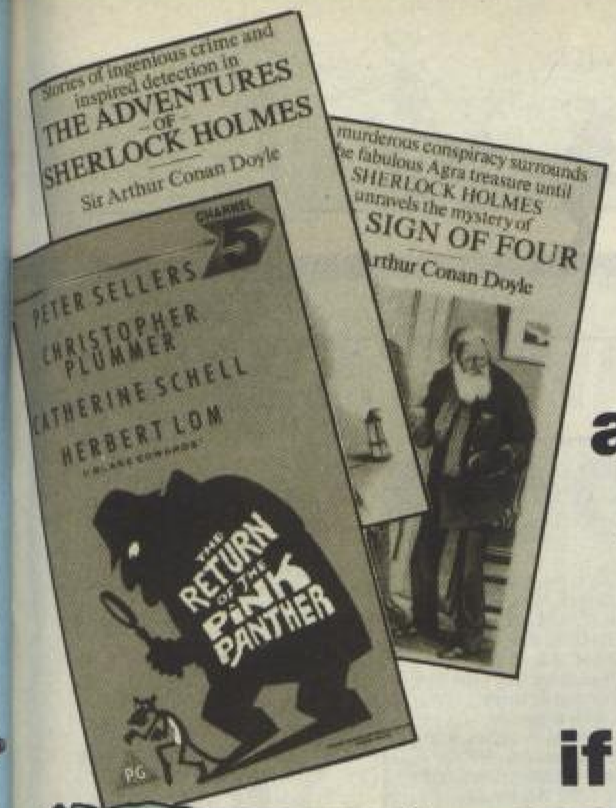
COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, P up, L down, ENTER to fire
Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: black-and-white playing area, some colour on displays
Graphics: rather slow wireframe, but nicely-detailed figures
Sound: 128 tune, otherwise simple beeps
Skill levels: one
Screens: a very large map area
General rating: atmospheric explore-and-find game, spoiled by its lack of speed

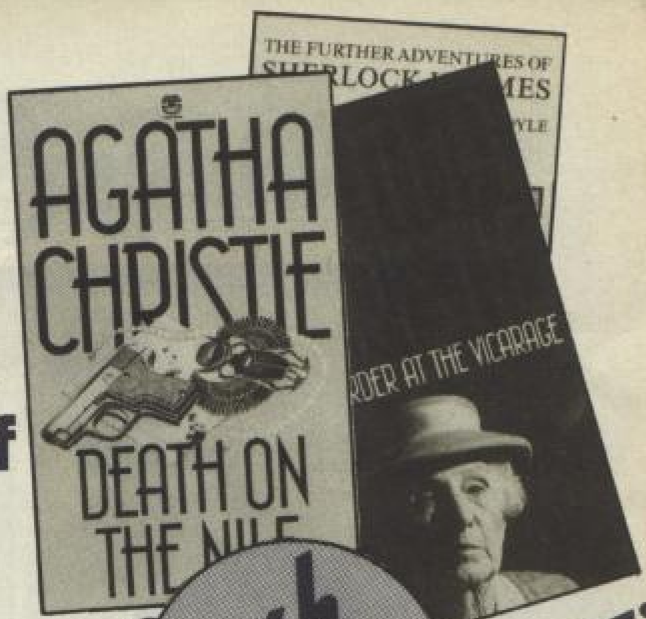
Presentation	71%
Graphics	63%
Playability	57%
Addictive qualities	54%
Overall	56%



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When all entries have been received – closing date 31st September 1987 – the top four players at each level will be called to a central venue to play-off for the title European Computer Golf Champion 1987 and receive their trophies and prizes.
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Crash Competition

The Case Of The Missing Buttered Scone

To celebrate the launch of US Gold's CRASH Smash *Killed Until Dead* (reviewed in Issue 42, July), they've organised a neat comp to get you in the mood for a game full of murder, mystery and suspense. Dear old Ricky Tidsall has been wandering the streets of Birmingham (in the pouring rain, he'll have you know) to get together some classic mystery novels and a brilliant Pink Panther video. Those prizes are all on offer if you can solve the CRASH whodunit puzzle: just who did pinch Minion's buttered scone? Read on . . .

The Minion relates his curious tale . . .

It was a stormy day when the fateful incident occurred. I was doing my usual rounds, sorting the mail, licking the reviewers' boots, watering the plants and washing down the gargoyles that stared menacingly through the foggy atmosphere when, as usual, at 11 o'clock I was lynched.

'Snack time, minion!' bellowed Our Omnipotent Lord Kean. I dread this daily – tramping down to the local purveyors of sickly buns. This journey means travelling through the gloomy swamplands, scaling the Ludlow falls, running across the deserted Shropshire plains – maybe I should be collecting Milk Tray rather than sticky buns . . .

Anyway, out with the shopping list to take everyone's orders. Well, I know Ricky Eddy's off by heart: one dozen coffee buns, six sausage rolls, two bacon-and-egg sarnies and one curry-flavoured meringue to top it off.

'Well, ack-sho-leeee I'm on a diet, just an apple thankyouverymuch,' he announced, bringing howls of laughter from the assembled crowd. 'An apple it is,' I thought . . .

Mangram, with his wide tastes in food, had an apple strudel this time.

Meanwhile, Roger and Barnaby were musing over the merits of *Invasion Of The Bloodsucking Spiders*, a video they'd been watching. In the midst of their revolting discussion of how Roger just couldn't bear the sight of spiders and how Barney couldn't stand the disgusting eating scenes – what with him being a vegan and all that – they did manage to deliver their order.

Cameron had his usual beetroot sarnie. 'And, Minion,' said the dictatorial Pound, 'don't forget my coffee. You know I can't eat anything without a mug of coffee and noooo sugar at all!'

So, after raiding the sticky-bun fund, I was off on my perilous journey: squelch, squelch, pant, splash, gurgle, pant, phew . . . On arriving at Ye Olde Sticky Bunne Shoppe, and after I'd made the order there was just enough for me to have a humble buttered scone. Well, not that humble – it was smeared with thick, creamery butter . . .

Great! Save that for later . . . back at the Towers, stomachs were getting hungry, and they were quickly stuffed. While the CRASH types munched, I hid the scone in the recently renovated broom cupboard.

The day carried on as normal, if that word can be applied to Newsfield, and come midnight (home time for minions) I began to feel a bit peckish. Off to the broom cupboard to retrieve my treat . . .

BUT (shock, horror, gasp!) it had gone. Nicked! Pinched! Swiped! Beside the pile of crumbs lay a mug of coffee, drunk so quickly that the sugar grains could still be seen in the bottom of the mug.

Who had performed this foul deed? I have my suspicions. If you can suss out who the evil one is, then these rewards could be yours . . .

For the successful solving of the Buttered Scone case
US GOLD REWARD

FIRST PRIZE: A copy of *Killed Until Dead*! A video of *The Return Of The Pink Panther*! An Agatha Christie novel – *Death On The Nile*!

FOUR SECOND PRIZES: Copies of *Killed Until Dead*! And either a Sherlock Holmes book or an Agatha Christie novel!

15 PRIZES FOR RUNNERS-UP: Copies of *Killed Until Dead*!

Dear Hercule De Minion
I think I have solved the crime and hereby name the following as the criminal:
(tick box)

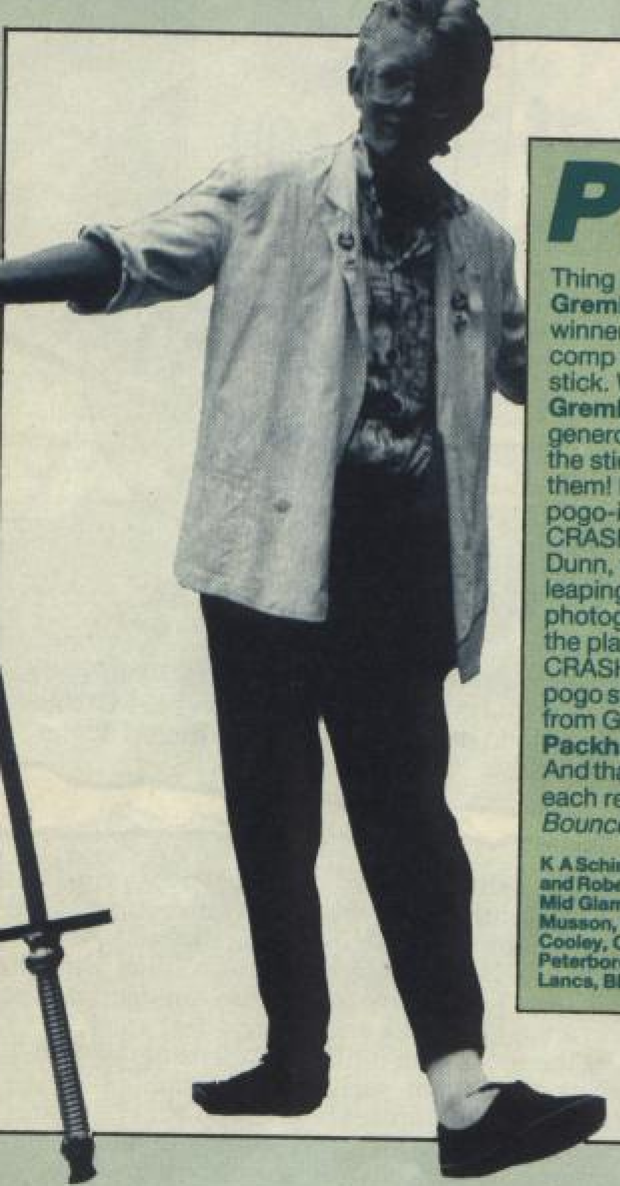
- ☐ Cameron Pound
- ☐ Barnaby Page
- ☐ Roger Kean
- ☐ Lloyd Mangram
- ☐ Richard Eddy

Name ....
Address ....
....
.... Postcode ....

SEND TO:
HERCULE DE MINION COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*, to arrive no later than **25 August**, when we'll draw correct entries from the forensic test tube

WINNERS & PRIZES







POGO A GOGO

Thing came bouncing back from **Gremlin Graphics**, and for the winner of our spot the difference comp there's a brand new pogo stick. Well the news is that **Gremlin Graphics** felt so generous that when they delivered the stick, they brought two with them! I managed to contain the pogo-ing enthusiasm of the CRASH reviewing team to Mike Dunn, who forsook skipping for leaping so that Cameron could photograph him bouncing all over the place. Anyway, the two CRASH readers who will get a pogo stick each are **Jamie Glover** from Grimsby, and **Daniel Packham** from Brixton, London. And that leaves 49 runners-up who each receive a copy of *Thing Bounces Back* . . .

K A Schimmel, Nottingham, NG5 8LN; Gary and Robert Byrne, Dublin 24, Eire; M Priddy, Mid Glamorgan, CF46 4RB; William Musson, Ponteland, NE20 9EU; Matthew Cooley, Coventry, CV3 6NU; Mark Ferrar, Peterborough, P66 6TS; Sean Warburton, Lancs, BB6 9EW; Alex Desmond-Hurst, Kent, ME14 1UR; John L Peel, Biata L-Bajda, Malta; Ian Pullinger, Herts, EN4 8EA; Scott Bruce, Glos, GL50 4RO; Steven Goodwin, Kent, ME18 5DG; Gary Golightly, Sunderland, SR4 0DH; W J Callis, Northampton, NN5 6RH; Geoffrey Sparkes, Suffolk, IP33 3JQ; Michael Stanton, Ayrshire, DA17 5BS; Billy Cassidy, Cheshire, SK5 8AP; Russell Prebble, Kent, DA7 4LH; Daniel Pearle, Somerset, TA8 2PA; Paul D McMullen, S Yorks, DN4 7QR; Dawn Ash, Kent, DA5 3BX; Adrian M Layden, Staffs, ST7 1TD; Duncan Harvey, Norfolk, NR7 8HL; Barry Gorman, Co Antrim, BT28 1SU; Nick Bold, Cheshire, WA7 2AG; Timothy Lowther, London, E17 5AU; Gregory Leversuch, Hants, SO4 1NY; Billy Pittridge, Norfolk, PE30 4SG; Steven Betteridge, Hereford, HR2 0TQ; Mrs S Foyster, Norfolk, NR6 5SJ; Nicholas Brown, Berks, RG11 1NH; Paul Caunce, Lancs, L39 1PJ; Sylvan Lynn, Avon, BA2 6RN; David Cole, Staffs, ST3 6AQ; Karl Fewster, S Humberside, DN16 1VG; Andrew Hickabottom, S Humberside, DN16 2PE; Jimmy Geatches, E Yorks, HU3 3SQ; Kristian Speke, Shropshire, SY8 1RN; Richard To, Manchester, M36 5BQ; Martin Dutton, Lancs, BL6 7HW; Richard Willnott, Exeter, EX4 2EB; Raymond Lee, Glasgow, G51 2DW; Mark J Beeham, Cheshire, CW8 3HY; Richard Evans, Norfolk, PE34 4LY; Stephen Hannan, Southampton, SO1 1RA; James Postlethwaite, Derbys, DE5 1JW; Jason Pritchard, Derbys, DE5 1NN; James McNair, Norfolk, NR29 3BY; David Tilley, London, E17 4BJ.



PERFECT TIMING

Or the Ticking Minions comp, a little number designed to see who would win a *Metrocross* stopwatch from **US Gold**. The winner is **Dean Schofield** from Tamworth in Staffordshire, who also gets a copy of the game. 20 further runners up each receive the game *Metrocross* . . .

Neil John Dearling, Newquay, Cornwall; Marcus Cooper, Bromsgrove; Peter Brannelly, Shrewsbury, SY3 8AH; Richard Last, Essex, CO12 3NP; Olufemi Adehunle, Berwickshire, Scotland; Steven Roberts, Merseyside, WA11 8JR; Darren Anderson, Kent, BR7 2BL; Martin Clark, Lanarkshire, G12 0QA; Scott Plumridge, Kent, DA11 7EE; Colin Cheghall, Dundee, DD4 6TL; Nicholas Anthony, Mid-Glamorgan, CF31 4SS; Kerry Taylor, Rotherham, S62 7HA; Ric White, S Yorks, DN3 2LB; Luis Mighuel dos Santos Silva Ferandes, Foz do Dovro, Portugal; Liz Baker, St Helens, WA10 5PJ; Caroline Haines, Beds, LU7 0DH; Sandra Mara Martins Pereira, Cascais, Portugal; George Strachan, Aberdeenshire, AB4 6JE; Paul Durkin, Devon, EX8 4PX; Paul Durkin, Devon, EX8 4PX; A J Nuttall, Worcs, DY11 6NH.



► **If you want to know the time ask Ben Stone, who lends some hands to Dean Schofield's winning ticker (bottom left)**



GREAT THRONES OF FIRE

To celebrate Mike Singleton's *Throne of Fire*, **Melbourne House** were offering a trip to the London Dungeon for the winner (and a friend). **Gary A Vickers** from Langworth, Lincoln got the answers right and was first out of the bag, so hang onto your nerves Gary . . . it's dark down there. Answers were: *Space Ace was Mike's first game, Consult is the programming team behind Throne of Fire*, there are 32,000 views in *Lords of Midnight, Computer Race* was the name of Mike's illegal game, and King Atherik is the *Throne of Fire* monarch.

For 25 runners up there's a copy of the game, and they go to:

John McMunn, Co Sligo, Ireland; Matthew Battram, Essex, RM7 9AU; Tim Henry, Lancs, PR1 0EL; David Greenwood, Lancs, BL8 2LX; Scott Cooper, London, NW4 2BT; N Chesworth Jnr, Cornwall, PL18 9NA; Trevor Carlisle, Bucks, HP13 7JR; Matthew Pierce, Stafford, ST18 0UB; Fergal Keenan, Co Tipperary, Eire; Robert Straw, Guernsey, Channel Islands; Jonathan Russell, N Ireland, BT79 0AT; Jason Pritchard, Derbys, DE5 1NN; Simon Ladds, Lincs, NG31 9HH; Jonathan Davies, Bristol, BS7 8DH; E de Vries, Voorburg 2274 KD, Holland; James Tyrell, Liverpool, L4 0UD; Vink Quan, London, N1 1TW; Jonathan Ridehalgh, Leics, LE6 0SS; Anthony Lawton, N Humberside, DN14 7AT; Brendan Cooney, Dublin 14, Eire; Samu Miclonen, Tampere, Finland; Neil Short, Barnard Castle, Co Durham; Wayne Birch, Lincs, LN7 6NP; Eric Lakin, Hants, PO6 2AG; Sandra Maria Pereira, Cascais, Portugal.

SHADOWS OF MORDOR

Okay, so some idiot up in 'art' went and changed my words – I know how to spell M-O-R-D-O-R. But for a lucky someone who can spell the words in the wordsquare comp, there's a specially-made engraved silver-plated goblet, plus a copy of the game. Said lucky goblet-owner is **Kyle Marlow** from Hinkley, Leicestershire, because he can spell (and some people up in 'art' can't . . .). Ten runners up get a copy of the game plus special mugs and posters, while another ten get a copy of the game, and they are . . .

Game, mug and poster:
John Clifton, London, SE3 7LQ; Adam Fletcher, Middlesex, TW15 3QU; R Finlayson, Glasgow, G53 7UJ; Ian King, W Midlands, DY4 8BH; Henry Tomlinson, Lancs, FY7 7DY; M G Hemming, Glos, GL52 6SB; Mark Haddon, Northumberland, NE2 6YN; Richard Hannah, Strathclyde, G84 8XG; Iain McCann, Sheffield, S7 2QX; T Randless, Bucks, HP14 4LX.

Game only:
David Millard, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE5 1EL, , Darryl Sykes, Huddersfield, HD7 7HW; E8286535 AC Williams BDA, RAF Halton, Bucks; Guy C Miller, Scotland, G12 8EU; Richard Burton, Cornwall, TR12 6RB; T Blake, London, N1 2QU; Michael James Brown, W Yorks, WF5 0QD; B Challinor, Shropshire, TF9 2DX; Jinay Shah, Surrey, CR4 1EJ; Glenn McDowall, Wilts, SP2 7EG

CRASH ADVENTURE COMP

This was the last of our three competitions in association with **Ferguson**, and a chance for adventurers to win a Ferguson MC05 colour monitor and a Spectrum +2. The quester in question is **Mrs A Cutting** of Ryde, Isle of Wight. While she enjoys the benefits of adventuring Ferguson style (no playing arcade games Mrs Cutting . . . !), ten runners up get CRASH hats and T-shirts. The answers she gave correctly were: *Fantasia Diamond*, Derek Brewster (*Kentilla*), the Ket Trilogy (Incentive), *Bored of the Rings*, *Urban Upstart* and finally, *Snowball, Return to Eden and* Worm in Paradise. The ten runners up are:

Oliver Critchley, Invernesshire, PH31 4AN; Stuart Randall, Hants, PO12 3QN; Paul Rafferty, Renfrewshire, PA10 2HQ; Ian Smith, Cheshire, SK8 3LF; Mr A Webster, Essex, RM9 4DS; Colin Jordan, Dyfed, SA69 9ED; Michael Turner, Essex, CM9 8RQ; Barry Smith, Suffolk, IP6 8PG; Gavin Horne, Berks, SL6 2YN; Bruce Hall, Edinburgh, EH14 1DL.

STARFOX

Producer: **Reaktör**
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **Realtime**

The eight-planet Hyturian system has long been surrounded by the Rubicon, a peacekeeping protective cube. Now the Rubicon has been breached by an aggressive ninth world which is popping fighters into space. Their progress must be halted.

You pilot the powerful fighter *Starfox*, looking into hostile space through the upper half of a horizontally-split screen. The lower portion consists of three small rear-facing scanners which alert you to approaching enemy space fighters and convoys.

The enemy can be engaged using *Starfox*'s laser, and you can get updated weapons by travelling down a wormhole to a planet and carefully docking with the mother ship which orbits it. Three weapons can be held at a time.

MIKE

" Starfox is impressive, to say the least. The graphics are good – easily matching, even bettering those of the classic Starstrike II, **which is an accolade! There's playability and addictivity in bundles, and I'd recommend this shoot-'em-up to anyone. "**

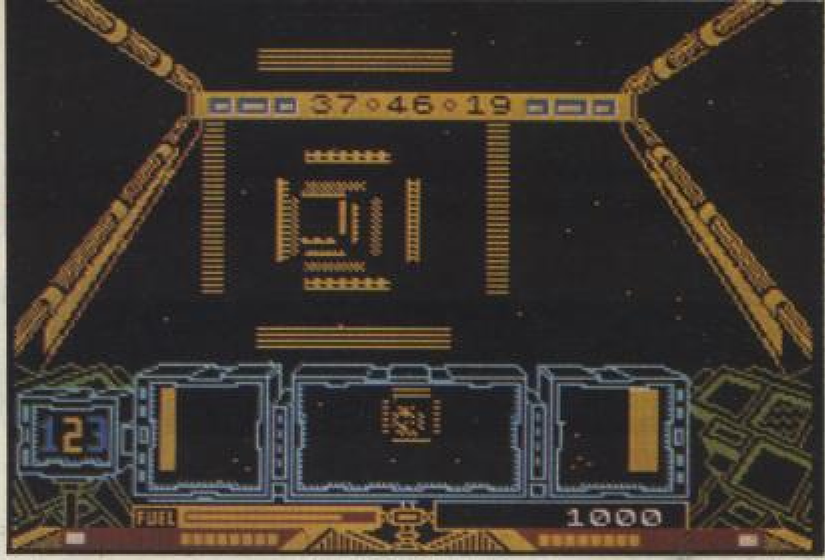
The mother ship can also repair damage sustained in alien attacks – damage is shown on shield indicators in the cockpit window.

Starfox has limited fuel reserves, which fall dramatically when turbo boost is engaged – speed bars show the ship's velocity. Extra supplies can be offloaded from a fuel ship when you're notified it's in the area.

Two logs can be called up. A general log indicates the coordinates of dangerous electron and ice-crystal storms, the make-up of the weapon pack and details of attacking enemy craft. And the autopilot log points the ship in the right direction for travel to logged planets. Coordinates of planets, convoys and storms can be compared against present-position coordinates, shown on the centre crossbar of the main viewing screen.

When planets and enemy convoys are located, they're put on the holocube, a 3-D map of the universe which you can zoom in on or rotate to any angle.

At first your task is simply to destroy enemy fighters. At higher levels, more difficult missions are set. When all eight levels have been finished, the Hyturian system is safe.



► As pilot of the *Starfox*, you're alone in a high-tech combat zone

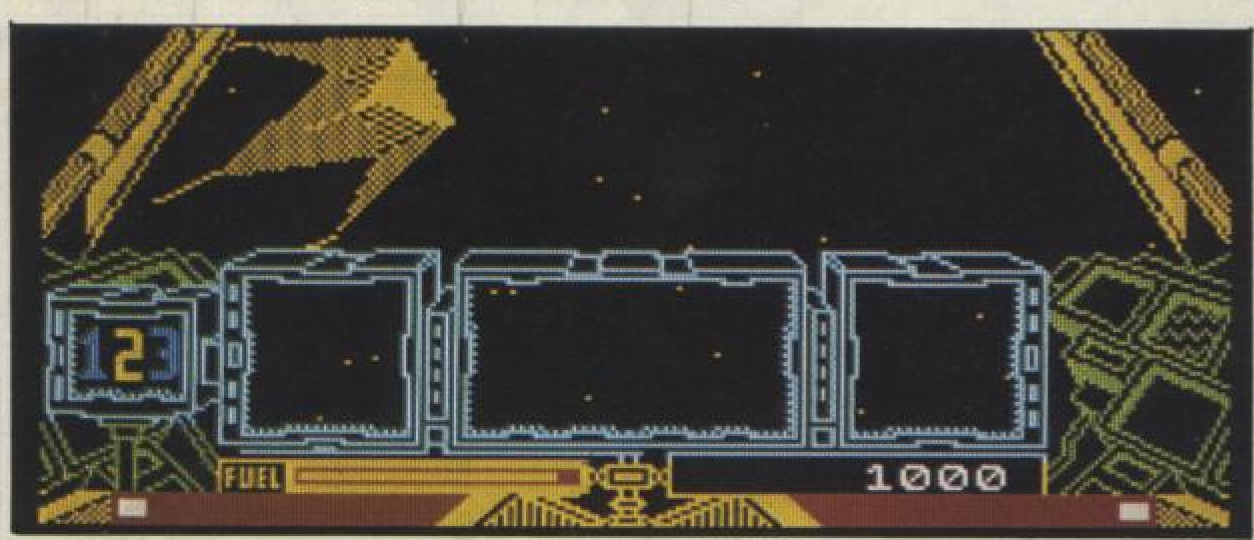
BEN

" Despite the brains and neat ideas behind Starfox, **it becomes boring once you've learned the basics. The combat phase is very slow and the controls are much too cumbersome to use effectively. Some features add to the gameplay, but they make it confusing too. I wouldn't recommend this – it's monotonous and unplayable. "**

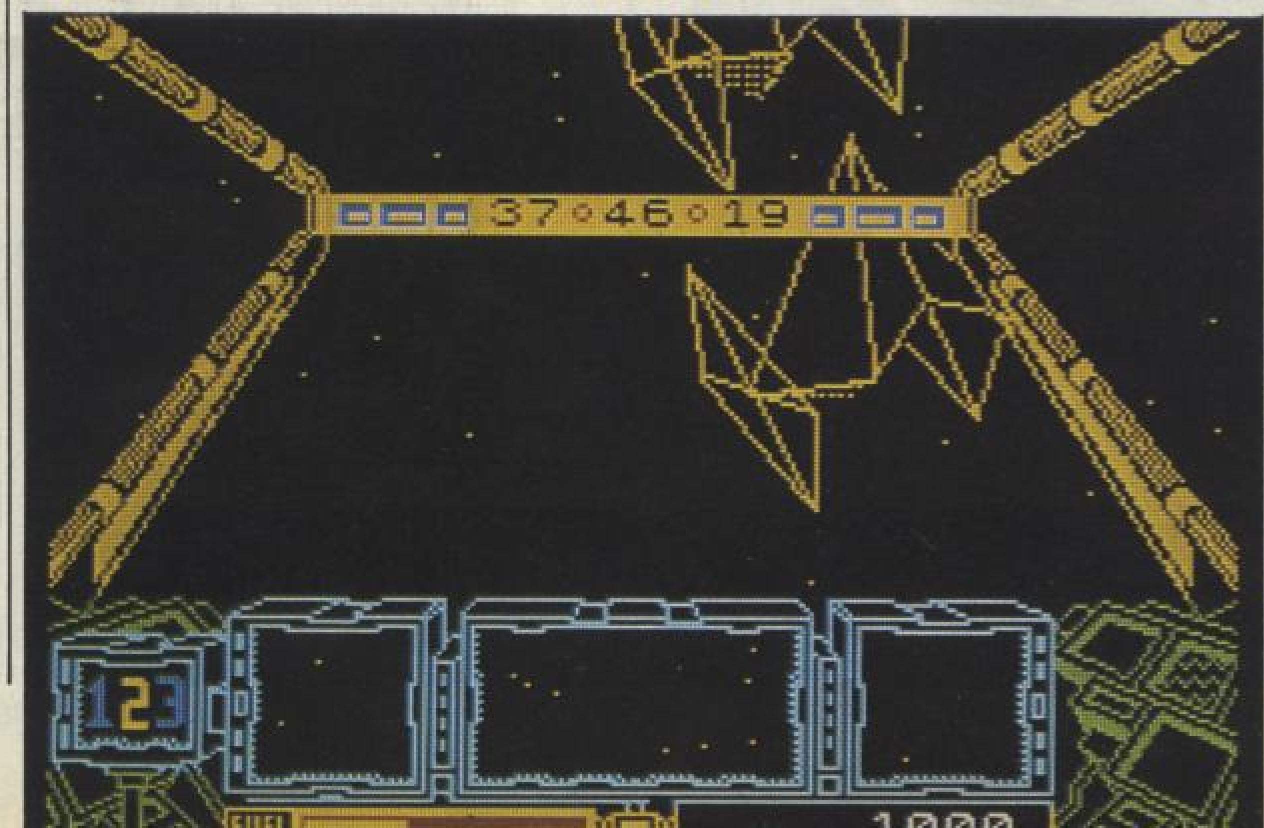
ROBIN

" Starfox **isn't instantly as playable as some Realtime games, such as** Starstrike. **But the graphics are better, with smooth-moving shaded 3-D spaceships. Yet again sound is limited to a few odd effects, though. And at first the many controls are a bit fiddly – like other space epics (**Code Name Mat, Elite**),** Starfox **has a lot in it but takes a while to master. Then it's a joy to play. The fight sequences are great, reminiscent of** Elite **– the odds are stacked against you and it can be a real battle of wits. And** Starfox **has some innovative features, such as the 3-D Holocube, which is very useful for navigation if you know how the 3-D coordinates work.** Starfox **is very good if you put some effort into it. "**

► Outstanding graphics add atmosphere to the view from *Starfox*'s cockpit



► Scanners and speed bars on the lower half of the screen keep you posted as you coast through hostile space



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: excellent
Sound: spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: the view from the cockpit
General rating: a good solid shoot-'em-up despite difficult controls

Presentation	76%
Graphics	90%
Playability	68%
Addictive qualities	72%
Overall	77%

DEADRINGER

Producer: **Reaktör**
Retail Price: **£4.99**

High above Earth hangs the space equivalent of Wembley – a doughnut-shaped ring, home of the Death-Race. On this ring competitors meet in a game where to lose is to die.

Each racer rides an armoured skimmer which can move to any of the three surfaces of the ring. Visibility and therefore safety are best on the inner edge, but the largest prizes await the victor on the outside edge.

Using your ability to switch between surfaces, you can avoid obstacles and approaching craft. These are shown on a large central viewing scanner, with a smaller screen giving the receding rearward view. Three bars below the main screen show the skimmer's position in relation to other craft on each of the three surfaces.

Since victory is based on points awarded for the destruction of fellow competitors, each skimmer is equipped with a blaster and a protective shield. The blaster has a limited ammunition supply and the shield only finite strength.

Should the shield be breached by too many contacts with other racers, then one of the craft's three lives is lost. And the other two may go as easily in the fast, harsh Death-Race.

CRITICISM

● " Deadringer **is one of the worst games I've seen this month. The idea isn't too bad – a sort of 3-D** Shockway Rider **in space – but the programmers have made a real mess of it. Graphics are jerky, badly defined and poorly coloured, and there's little playability. It doesn't come close to value for money. "**

MIKE

● " Deadringer *is instantly playable – within a couple of games you'll be happily blasting the opposition away. But it's only an average game, lacking challenge and depth. The graphics are soon forgotten, and the sound on the title screen is annoying. "*

ROBIN

● " The concept is great – if only it had been successfully implemented. The graphics range from very mediocre backgrounds and track graphics to some superbly-drawn cars, but they're all badly animated. And shooting round the tracks would be great fun if only you had some feeling of movement. There's very little to do in *Deadringer*. "

PAUL



► **Take to the track in the space race stadium for the ultimate Death Race. Have you got what it takes to be the Deadringer of the future?**

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: full colour but dull
Graphics: poor and jerky
Sound: aggravating title squeaks
Skill levels: one
Screens: continous scrolling
General rating: just another shoot-'em-up

Presentation	49%
Graphics	39%
Playability	51%
Addictive qualities	40%
Overall	42%

SUPER G-MAN

Producer: **Code Masters**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Peter Williamson**

Frolicking with his jet pack, G-Man missed the last space shuttle. Now he faces a hazardous expedition across the moon, which is infested with aliens.

G-Man can thrust upward, and accelerate or slow his forward speed. And he can increase his jet pack's fuel by touching fuel cells on the lunar surface.

As he moves across the moon, G-Man encounters piercing rock escarpments, yawning chasms and land mines which threaten his three lives. These inanimate dangers are supplemented by green hollow worms, the giant Blowerfish, vertically-firing missiles, fireballs and horizontally-flying hardware.

All can be blasted, but G-Man needs plenty of ammo, which he must acquire on his adventures.

G-Man's progress on this scrolling-screen moon world is shown on a distance indicator. Entering a teleport cubicle moves him at the speed of light – though it might lead G-Man into an uncomfortable situation.

CRITICISM

● " Super G-Man **looks like a failed O level Computer Studies project! The graphics are awful, and the scrolling is jerky, messy and unattractive. And though the sound is better then you'd get from a 15-year-old schoolperson, it's way below the standard I'd expect from a pro. This isn't worth a fraction of the price. "**

MIKE

● " Super G-Man *is one of the best games Code Masters have ever produced. I love David Whittaker's music in small doses, though having it nonstop is beyond a joke. (You can't turn it off.) The graphics are reasonable, and colour is used well though the scrolling colour doesn't really work. The music is the best thing. "*

NICK

● " *Super G-Man* is a poor *Jetman* variant. The scrolling jerks along merrily, the graphics are small and not very impressive, and the title tune is annoying. The idea is simple, and *Super G-Man* is an easy-to-play package – but it soon becomes dull. "

ROBIN



COMMENTS

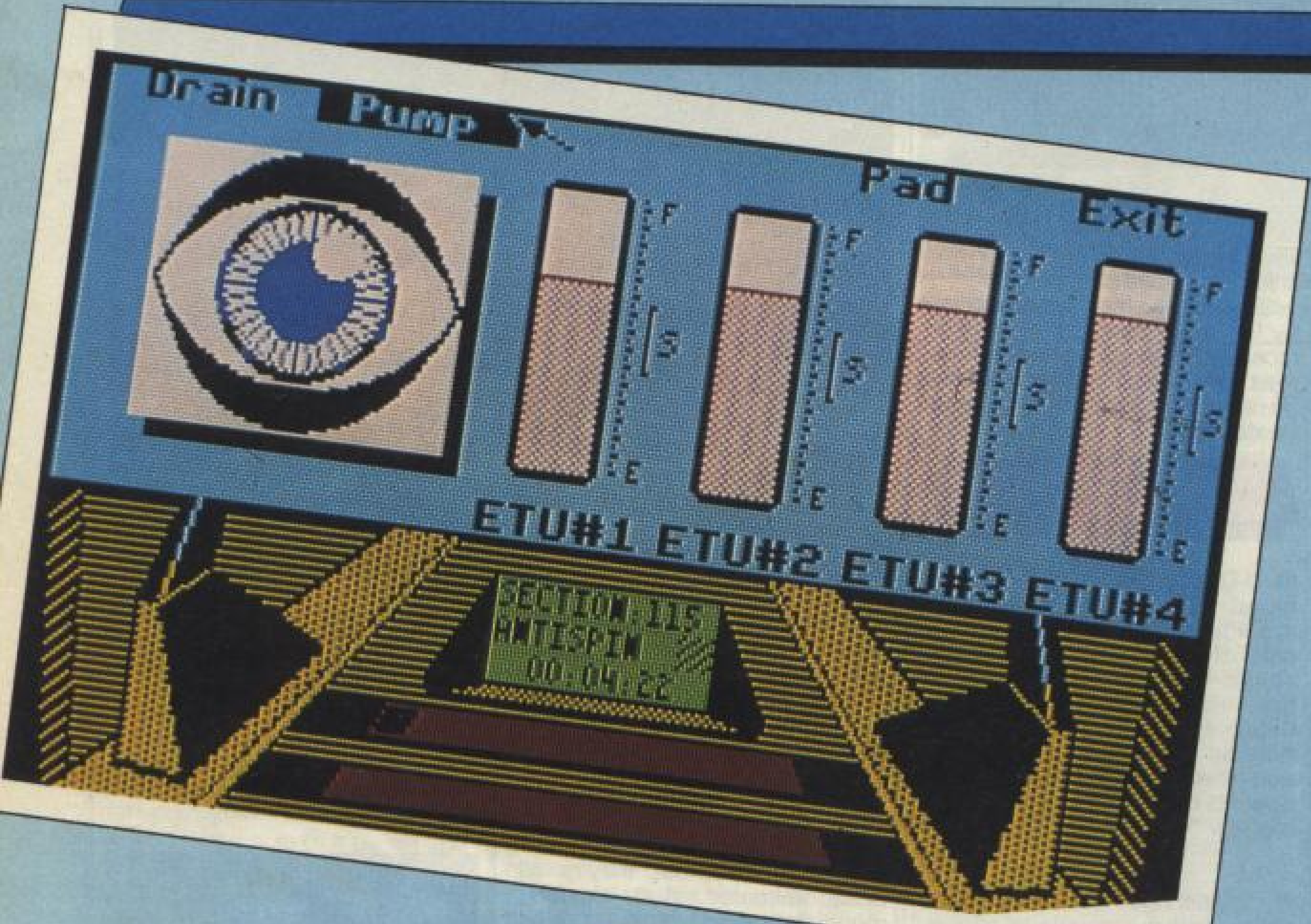
Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: average
Graphics: terrible scrolling and jerky characters
Sound: irritating tunettes
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: a weak and uninteresting *Jetman* variant

Presentation	54%
Graphics	47%
Playability	35%
Addictive qualities	38%
Overall	43%

► **Man In The Moon:** *Super G-Man*



M·I·C·R·O·N·A·U·T O·N·E



As a member of the Guild Of Equalisers, you control a ship passing through the tunnel network of a biocomputer. The passageways are infested with Scrim – mutated fly-like predators, thriving on the computer's warmth and energy. Their eggs hatch into larvae and develop into web-spinning adult Jellyflies.

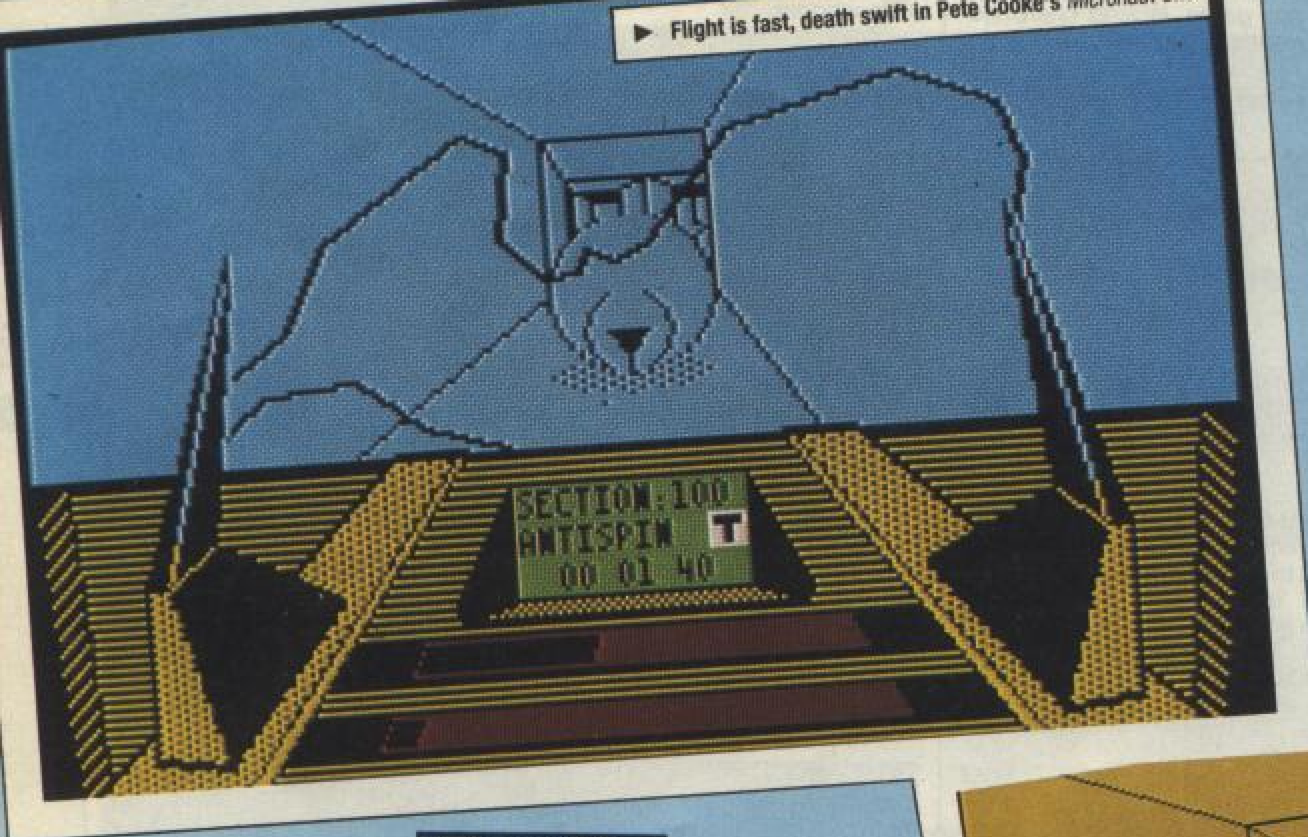
Your craft can be guided along an intricate network of rectangular

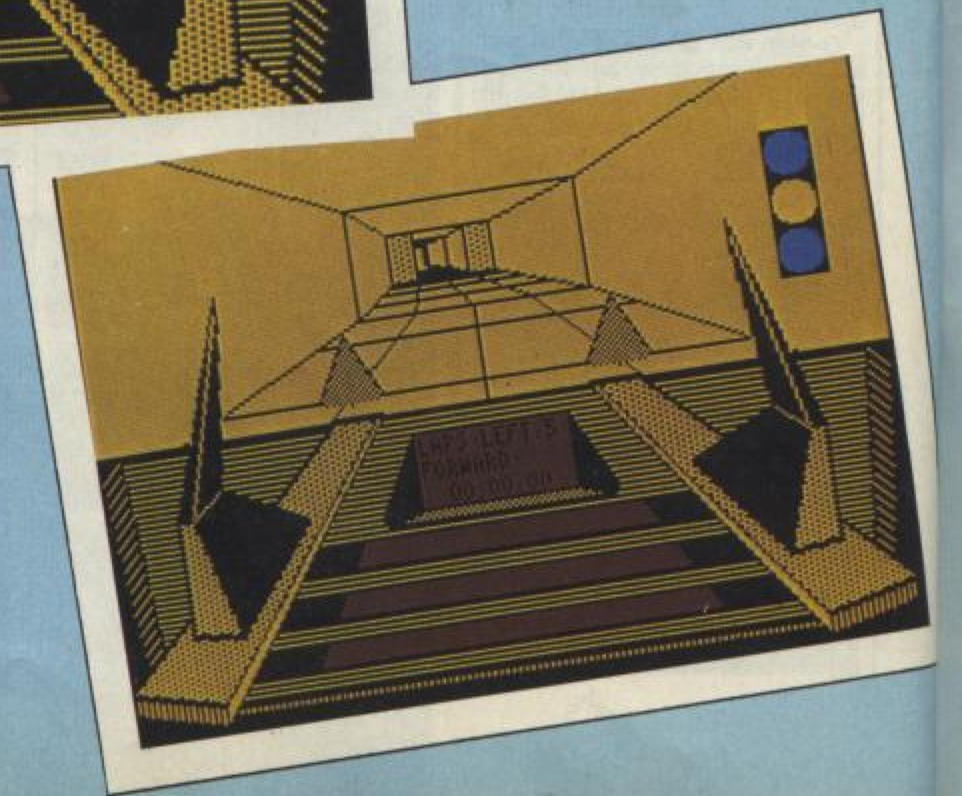
CRITICISM

" Pete Cooke's works have been definitive landmarks of innovation, and Micronaut One follows suit. It's not exactly a complex game, but it is involving. The inlay sets the scene beautifully and explains the myriad of options. The tunnels appear very solid because of the mixture of masked vector graphics and the occasional wall. And perspective has been used well: not only do the Scrim move forward and backward in perspective but also, if the angle of view is changed vertically, the perspective changes accordingly. The only letdown is the sparse sound. The Tau Ceti duo were, I felt, too open visually, provoking a sense of 'what do I do next?'. But Micronaut is my sort of game – enthralling, exciting and highly playable. "

RICKY

► **Flight is fast, death swift in Pete Cooke's** *Micronaut One*







Producer: **Nexus**
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Pete Cooke**

tunnelling, punctuated by junctions and projections, all shown on a split screen.

A map of the tunnels can be called up, with your position shown. And you can set up markers as homing points for the ship's Navigational Locking System.

The vehicle can move to avoid obstacles, take alternative routes, and stalk Scrim. Collisions cause interference on the viewing screen, and directional changes are indicated on a central window in terms of spin. You can only reverse when you hit an obstacle.

CRITICISM

" Wow! Micronaut One **is really attractive – and there's a full, polished, and thoroughly enjoyable game lurking under the smooth and fast vectors. The race subgame is a nice distraction, and supplements the full game well. The front end is polished to the point of being shiny; the vast array of options are all easily accessible from the superb select system; and it's obvious Pete Cooke has paid attention and time to all the tiny little details which make a good game seem great. "**

MIKE

Your craft is equipped with a targetable weapons system which throws forward energy tendrils. Killing parasitic Scrim may require persistent firing – and exhaust your energy. Passing through a nebulous energy swarm restores it, though.

And the craft's energy must be kept within a narrow range. Energy can be transferred to and from the craft by docking at any of four Cyclopean stations, protected by periodically closing translucent doors. At each of these, energy can be pumped into or drained from the vehicle's corresponding Energy Transfer Units (ETUs). At a safe level the energy bar is green, otherwise it's red.

If the energy level goes way beyond the limits – as it does if the craft is blocked in by Scrim webbing – the whole biocomputer complex could face explosive consequences.

When all the Scrim on a level have been destroyed, the craft is automatically transported to the next – and worse infestation. Information on alien life forms and the biocomputer can be accessed.

And you can always cop out – by leaving the creature-infested passages and simply competing against time in a five-lap race through the tunnels. A pacer provides additional motivation.

Micronaut One programmer Pete Cooke (*Tau Ceti*, *Academy*) reveals all – well, some – in the last CRASH (Issue 42, July 1987).

CRITICISM

" Pete Cooke has always produced first-class games, so I loaded Micronaut One **in anticipation. The loading screen is a letdown – but the rest is fantastic. Graphically,** Micronaut One **is a smoother-moving, better-presented version of the 3-D tunnel game** Zig Zag **(an ancient hit by DK Tronics – CRASH Issue Five, June 1984). Gameplay is fast and furious, and the huge playing area features complex maps (one designed by yours truly . . .) so hours of fun can be had just exploring.** Micronaut One **can be a bit hard to get into, but perseverance and the inclusion of the simple race game more than make up for this. Pete Cooke has another hit on his hands, and no self-respecting games player should be without it. "**

ROBIN

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: monochromatic – but you can choose the ink colour
Graphics: excellent vectors and a good score line
Sound: limited spot FX
Skill levels: two separate games: one easy, one very difficult
General rating: original, visually stunning, very playable and addictive

Presentation	96%
Graphics	91%
Playability	89%
Addictive qualities	93%
Overall	**92%**

WOLFAN

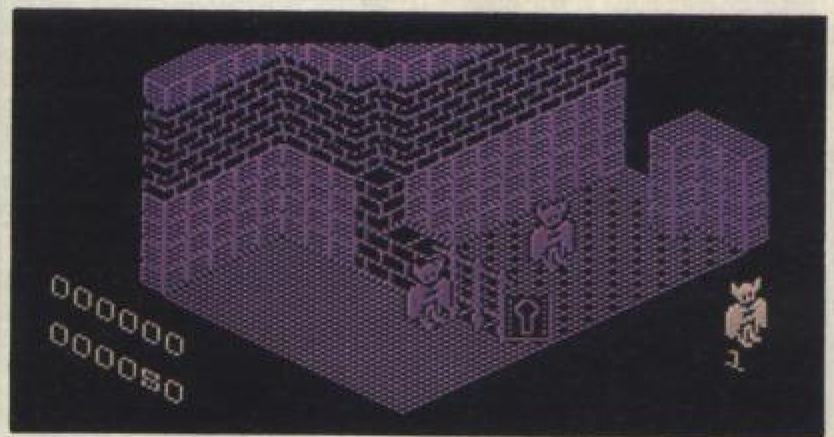


Producer: **Bulldog**
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Charles Bystram**

Dark thoughts, deeds and demons lurk deep in a sinister kingdom. Wolfan the barbarian enters this demonic paradise to clear up the clutter and confront that contradictory and nameless being the **Nasty One**.

Wolfan sets off on his murky quest through a flick-screen world of garden pathways, arboreal arcades and stone halls. He encounters monsters – some are intelligent, some have one brain cell searching for a friend, some are nomadic following Wolfan between screens, and some remain confined to a single screen.

These critters attack Wolfan, sometimes unprovoked, and he also risks falling down mineshafts. But the monsters can topple coreward into these Coal Board relics, too, taking to oblivion any useful items they hold.



► **Things are nastier than they seem in *Wolfan***

Wolfan can kill these aggressive creatures with well-aimed bombs or by transforming them into fat frogs. He then acquires anything they're carrying – but when the monsters carry objects to other screens, Wolfan can't get them back. Other items such as bones, moneybags and skulls can be gathered from the pathways and halls, to earn points.

For further aid, Wolfan can command monsters to speak, or ride on their beastly backs, though a fall from their bony shoulders puts our hero in intensive care. He can pick up extra knowledge by nuzzling the snout of a pig-headed Soothsayer, provided the Soothsayer has the globe of vision.

After chomping on a magic frog, Wolfan can barehandedly slaughter wizards.

And some mercenary monsters may accept bribes to join Wolfan's army; others are eager volunteers.

CRITICISM

● **" We can do without a** Greyfell **clone this bad. The graphics are reasonable as forced 3-D goes, despite the unattractive characters, and the scrolling message is a nice (if unoriginal) touch. But there's not much playability, and** Wolfan **is essentially boring. "**

MIKE

● *" Look out, world – it's another 3-D game with the same graphics and monochromatic colour scheme as all the others.* Wolfan's *only appeal lies in a cute touch: you can talk to any object around you, though the answer is usually 'Hello Wolfan . . . I'm a tree!'.* Wolfan *will only appeal to people who don't have many 3-D games. "*

NICK

● " Whatever will they think of next? Another monochrome arcade adventure, no doubt. There's nothing new or exciting about *Wolfan*, it's simply lots of old ideas bundled into a boring and unplayable package. The graphics are typical of the Bulldog range, as is the awkward 3-D presentation. *Wolfan* is very much one of the monochrome pack. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: attractive but unoriginal
Sound: spot FX
Skill levels: one
General rating: uninspiring and derivative forced 3-D

Presentation	56%
Graphics	57%
Playability	47%
Addictive qualities	43%
Overall	47%

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

Producer: **Domark**
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Walking Circles**

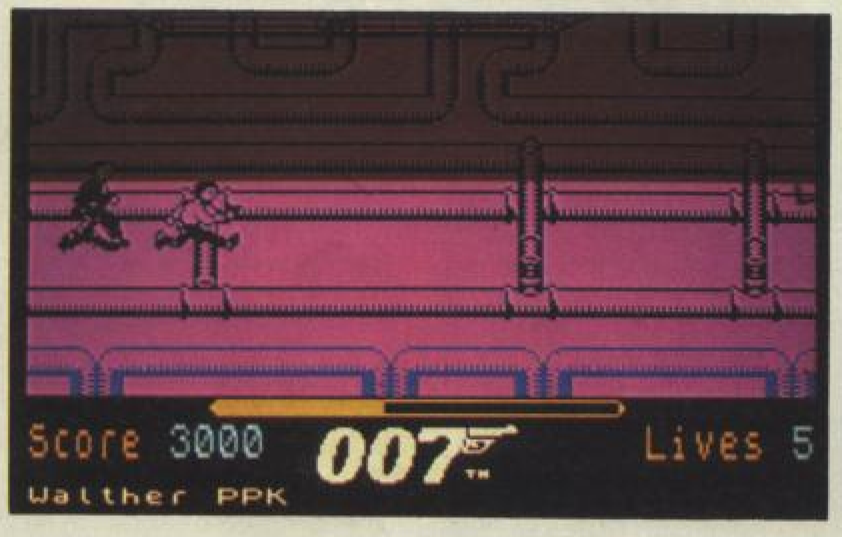
You've seen the film, gasped at last month's CRASH cover, read about the special effects, now let your tape recorder chew up the game cassette . . .

Bond is back in Domark's adaptation of the latest blockbuster – *The Living Daylights*. Programmed by Walking Circles, who are really Design Design in new guise, it takes 007 through eight levels of Bond action in his attempt to defeat evil international arms dealer Brad Whitaker.

At the beginning of each level (apart from the first, where a paint gun is automatically chosen) Bond is taken to Q's laboratory where one weapon from a choice of four may be selected. Only one of the four is of real help in crossing the level, and it's up to you to chose the correct one within the five-second time limit. If the object picked can't be used as a weapon Bond reverts to his trusty Walther PPK.

All game levels have horizontally-scrolling backdrops – split into three layers to give a 3-D effect through parallax, with Bond remaining centrally placed.

► **The escape through the Trans-Siberian Pipeline isn't quite like in the film . . .**



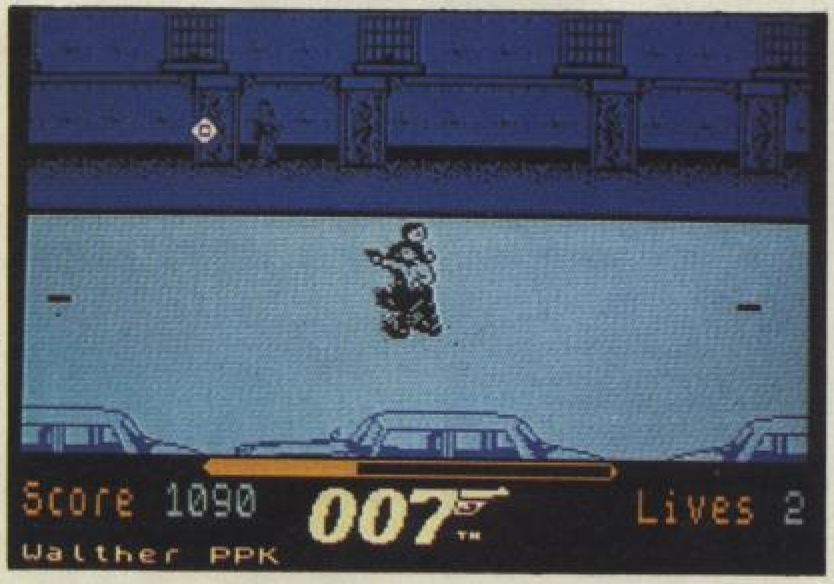
Bond's actions are controlled via four-directional movements and a fire button. A sight is provided onscreen for aiming shots, controlled in similar manner, but while it's visible Bond is unable to move. When the sight disappears, the doughty agent is once again licensed to run, leap, jump and roll.

The hunt for Whitaker begins in Gibraltar, where Bond is involved in an SAS training session (hence the paint guns). But one of the SAS is really an infiltrated member of Whitaker's team out to kill him. The SAS appear in the background occasionally popping up over the bushes while Bond runs along to the end of the landscape, jumping over the rocks, as tripping causes the energy bar to fall.

Levels Two and Three take 007 behind the Iron Curtain, first to visit the Lenin People's Music Conservatory where he's to help Russian KGB Colonel Koskov defect. However, there's a sniper out to kill Koskov – shoot the sniper and make a mercy dash for it and onto the Trans-Siberian Pipeline. This escape route presents Bond with an assault course of pipes at different heights, all of which he has to avoid to progress to the fourth level.

Back in Britain, where Koskov is being debriefed, the safe house has been infiltrated by Necros, another of Whitaker's henchmen. He's armed with exploding milk bottles and doesn't hesitate to lob them Bond's way. Shooting deters him from attacking for a while, but he'll be back.

► **Having collected defecting Koskov, 007 shoots at Whitaker's sniper outside the Lenin People's Music Conservatory**



BEN

" After trying hard to like this I failed miserably. The jerky parallax scrolling messes up the otherwise great graphics, so you can't see where you're going when running, to the huge detriment of the game's playability. Shooting the snipers that line the top of the screen is a thankless task, and while doing so you'll more than likely end up dead – the best bet on later levels is to leg it, ignoring the snipers altogether. The game's only redeeming feature is the wonderful title-screen music. It's a shame such sonic quality isn't continued throughout the game. "

BEN

► **With the famous Rock Of Gibraltar in the background, Bond splatters paint**



RICKY

"If you've seen the film this tie-in makes sense, but if you haven't it may all appear a bit confusing – jetting around the world shooting balloons, ducking milk bottles and diving around a pipeline. The eight levels are remarkably similar, all based around running forward while shooting Whitaker's henchmen. Some sections are unreasonably difficult, mainly because of the poor collision-detection. This is particularly apparent in the fairground scene, where you have to shoot the balloons so precisely it's unplayable. Graphically The Living Daylights **is good, with some super animation of the main character – but the scrolling scenery is jerky. I would have liked to have seen a game with more depth, and there's plenty of opportunity with the Bond licence. "**

RICKY



PAUL

" Comparisons with the film are bound to crop up, and to be fair to the programmers they seem to have fitted in all the locations comfortably, with enough room for some good little features. But while the film has engrossing action scenes, the game is just the same old idea over and over again with lots of different backgrounds to give a false impression of variation. However, there are some very smart touches; parallax scrolling, superb animation and a decent title tune. It complements the film well, but as a game by itself The Living Daylights **lacks variation. "**

PAUL

On Level Five, Bond meets Necros again in a fairground. This time the assassin's armed with explosive balloons which float threateningly toward you. Shoot the balloons one at time – but but don't shoot Necros, or all the balloons are released, leading to certain death.

Level Six takes us to Whitaker's HQ in Tangier. Bond makes his way across the rooftops, avoiding more henchmen before reaching the penultimate level – a Russian airbase deep within occupied Afghanistan.

Once again there's a load of massacring to do before he can reach the exit which leads to the eighth and final level inside Whitaker's Tangier house. In his mansion, surrounded by his military equipment, Whitaker makes his appearance and . . . well that's up to you. But where, in all of this, are the Bond girls?

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, four directions plus FIRE and jump required
Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: black-and-white line drawings on varied colours
Graphics: large, nicely defined and well-animated, but scrolling tends to mess things up at times
Sound: excellent tune, otherwise rather thin
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight scrolling levels
General rating: by no means a disaster, but the lack of real variation means lasting appeal is on the short side

Presentation	71%
Graphics	72%
Playability	65%
Addictive qualities	59%
Overall	63%

CHALLENGE OF THE GOBOTS

Producer: **Reaktör**
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Author: **Tony Cooper**

The Gobots' friends, have been captured and taken to the planet of Mobeius by minions of the wicked Dr Braxis. Knowing that the robotic supergroup are sure to make a rescue attempt, Braxis sits back upon his evil bottom and waits. In due course the Gobots arrive and set about their task of mercy.

You control Leader-1, a courageous mechanoid with all-round manoeuvrability who travels through a horizontally scrolling corridor of floor and ceiling, rippled by hills. In these tunnel confines helicopters, fighter craft, and vicious robots materialise or emerge from their buried silos, and touching any of them, or hitting the ground, ends one of his three lives.

To protect himself, Leader-1 carries laser weaponry, effective against almost all his enemies, but additionally he can excavate rocks from floor or ceiling and hurl them at opponents.

White globular enemy bases are lodged on both the floor and ceiling of Mobeius. These can be destroyed by picking up scooter clones and dropping them onto the bases. When all of the bases on a level have been shattered, the next level can be reached, with a bonus of scooters given.

Leader-1's capabilities are further tested by his human friends who fall from airborne copters. They can be saved, but only if our hero is fast and brave enough.

For your extra delectation, a second cassette contains a *Challenge of the Gobots* music track by Robert Schroeder.



► **Blasting away, our brave hero fights on while all around him rages the war of the** *Gobots*

CRITICISM

● **" The gameplay is totally dire but somehow it's addictive. I'm sure, though, that nobody's going to be hooked on a game that's been as badly implemented as this for very long. The controls are unwieldy – fiddling with the front end only makes them more so – it's due to this that things get very infuriating. The graphics are small but cluttered on screen, and they lack detail. Sound is** Gobots **only redeeming feature, although even that falls apart on the title screen – nice effects though. All in all I'd stay well away from this one. "**

BEN

● *" I never did like the* Gobots *cartoon so I didn't expect much of this game, and I got exactly that, not much! Worst is the presentation – there's no loading screen at the start, just the irritating way Reaktör games load. The game is almost impossible to play, move up or down just the tiniest bit and you crash into some big white blob going by. The mountainous landscape in the background moves very well and the sound isn't all that bad, but I would expect much more playability in a game. "*

NICK

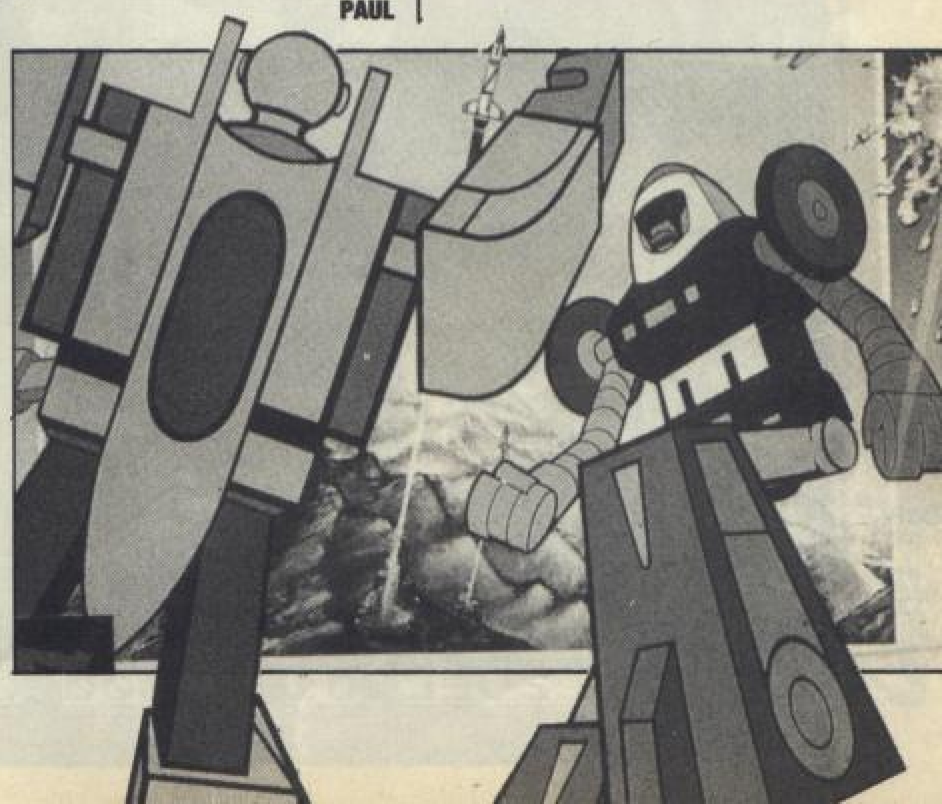
● " Nowadays all tie-ins are approached with the greatest trepidation and looking at *Gobots* it seems quite rightly so – there's very little to actually do. The game is unplayable for the most part, and all you really seem to be paying your money for are extras like the included soundtrack (a good laugh) and a stupid little storybook (only suitable for the under-sevens). Don't be fooled by all the implied content. *Gobots* is not a surprise, but more of a disappointment as another tie-in fails to come off. "

PAUL

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: varied and attractive but resultant attribute clashes
Graphics: very small display area and characters
Sound: good music and reasonable spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling
General rating: thin content and low playability makes the game very disappointing

Presentation	58%
Graphics	42%
Playability	32%
Addictive qualities	40%
Overall	37%



ROAD RUNNER

Producer: **US Gold**
Retail Price: **£8.99**

Along the roadways of the wilds of North America scuttles Roadrunner, the long legged meeping, beeping bird. In paw-blistering pursuit of this elongated sprinter comes the sharp nosed Mr Wile E Coyote, intent upon digging his canines into his prey's scrawny neck.

To escape his flesh-ripping fate Roadrunner can outsprint the coyote. But if nothing else, the prairie wolf is a persistent carnivore, and he's quite willing to pursue his avian adversary on paw, pogo stick, skateboard and even jet-powered skateboard.

The speeding bird has five lives which are lost if he's hit by an approaching truck, runs into one of the scattered boulders, or isn't spritely enough and ends up cuddling the coyote. Roadrunner can also meet his four feather fall by dropping into gaping crevasses, or stepping upon exploding mines. However both fates can be avoid by leaping over them.

But our hero's energy is not limitless, and he must gather seeds while he may to recoup his falling reserves. When a seed is missed an on screen message is displayed. Should he fail to pick up five seeds in a row, our sprinting songster faints with hunger and becomes easy poultry for the hungry coyote. But the seeds are not all they seem, some are rich in iron filings, and once lodged in Road Runner's gizzard, Mr Wile can use his powerful magnet to slow down the pesky bird.

Other features include invisible paint spilled upon the road, should either creature run through it, then both become invisible (making Roadrunner difficult to catch, but coyote hard to avoid), and lemonade, with points being scored by the gallant bird for the mouthfuls gulped.

For extra points Roadrunner can play chicken and let the ravening beast get close, then with a burst of speed leave him, poking out his tongue as he goes!



► **Coyote cuddling can be injurious to health**

NICK

" Beep, beep! Well, the sound is fabulous, I've never heard so many well composed tunes in one game. The graphics are average but the pictures of Road Runner and the Coyote around the edge of the screen are brill. The scrolling landscape behind Roady is done well and is very colourful as are all the other sprites running around the screen. The only thing that gets on my nerves is the way you have to load each level as you come to it. And if you are on level two and you get killed you have to load level one again. Quite good, but you'll need a pretty strong tape recorder to put up with the loading and re-loading! "

MIKE

" I was quite impressed by the presentation of Road Runner – the title screen, with the attractive border and tune (I played the 128 version) were all very nice, but when I started on the game, I was in for a disappointment. The in-game graphics aren't exactly stunning, as colour has been overused to the detriment of the reasonable characters, and I was most annoyed by the machine's finickiness over the placing of Road Runner in order to pick up a pile of seed. Overall, quite reasonable if you're a big fan of the cartoon, but as a stand alone game, it's a bit of a let down. "

ROBIN

"Road Runner is the latest in a long line of arcade conversions, and this game doesn't really improve their image. On the whole the graphics are reasonable with smooth animation but the old problem of attribute clash rears its ugly head once again. The music is actually quite good but I found the poor quality of the Spectrum's sound department meant that it soon became a bit grating. Road Runner's a very simple game; it doesn't take many goes to get into the style of play but I found some initial frustration with the controls to be off putting. If you're a fan of the arcade original then take a look, but I would say that it would be wise to play before buying. "

► **Despite the attractive side panels, the colour in the playing area sometimes leads to character confusion**





COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, M to jump
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Use of colour: attractive, and suitably desert-like
Graphics: nicely defined, but clashes often lose the detail
Sound: excellent
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling
General rating: far from the best tie-in/conversion yet, but despite some let down on the graphics, still a reasonably playable and addictive game

Presentation	78%
Graphics	73%
Playability	75%
Addictive qualities	72%
Overall	73%

CONVOY RAIDER

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail Price: **£7.99**

The seas are awash with enemy ships and submarines, asking to be wiped out so that the world's waters can be free once more – and in command of a powerfully armed ship, that's your task.

A map screen displays your ship's position – a flashing white circle – and that of the enemy in the area. A compass and speed readout act as navigational aids and help in directing the ship by joystick. A highlighted section of a smaller inset provides an overview of sea and land.

NICK

" At first I didn't think I was going to like this game because of the slap-happy way it's presented. There's no loading screen, no tune, or any other little special touch that makes a game. But once loaded, the perspective used on the map screen is quite good with the sides of the map trailing off into the background. The general idea is to blow everything out of the water with as much force as you can, although it's less of an arcade game and more likely to appeal to strategy fans. "

BEN

" Convoy Raider **is a sort of collection of little games that wouldn't make it on their own, rather like** Beach Head, **but a few steps on. It's been implemented with a lot of care so, generally, it works very well. But the gameplay is desperately lacking in content – the three sub-games simply aren't enough to keep any self-respecting games player happy for long. The graphics are fairly good, especially the helicopter screen with its representation of the sea bottom. On the whole, though, I wouldn't strongly recommend this as it's not very addictive or playable. "**

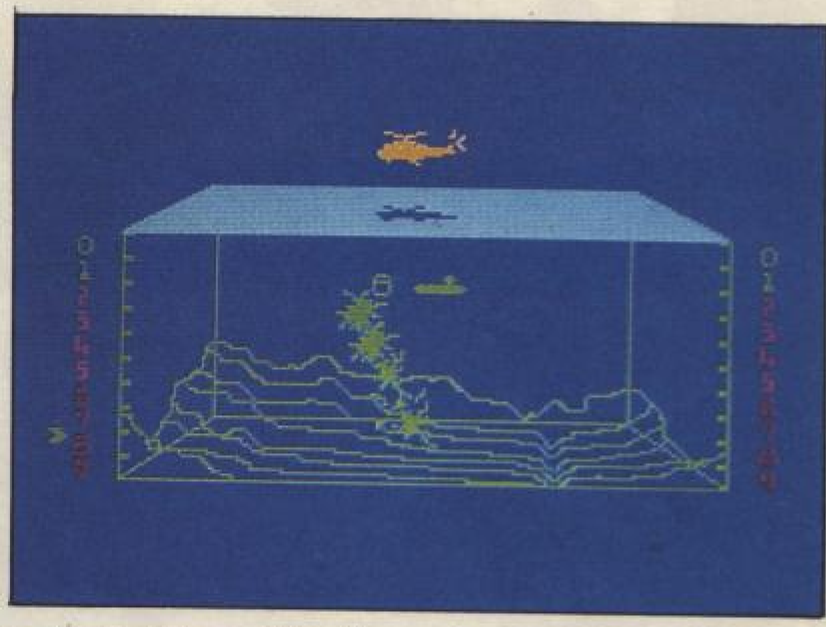
Three radar screens show the position of enemy aircraft and missiles, surface shipping and submarines. An on screen alert indicates the dangerous proximity of enemy forces. An enemy base on the map is indicated by a flag of the Rising Sun, and from here waves of attacking aircraft can be launched to threaten you.

Your ship is equipped with three defensive or retaliatory weapons systems, Seawolf and Exocet missiles and submarine destroying helicopters. Steerable Seawolf missiles destroy give gyro or radar readouts, the approaching aircraft and anti-ship missiles, whilst Exocets can be flown low over the sea to take out surface ships. In this weapons mode, four video screens appear, the largest showing a view from the missile's nose, whilst others missile's remaining flight time and height above the sea. If flown too high, signals from the Exocet can be jammed and its transmitted picture lost.

Deployment and activation of Exocets takes place in two phases. First, the missile, using the gyro compass, is flown to the enemy's last known position. Once there a target silhouette on the horizon can be chosen. Missiles must be fired and reach their target before their flight time expires.

To attack underwater, an anti-submarine helicopter can be used by stationing it above the sea's surface, seen as a 3-D map showing the seabed beneath. The chopper drops depth charges, which explode at a depth determined by the position of a moving arrow at the moment the charge was dropped. Submarines fire missiles upwards, and should too many strike the helicopter it's destroyed.

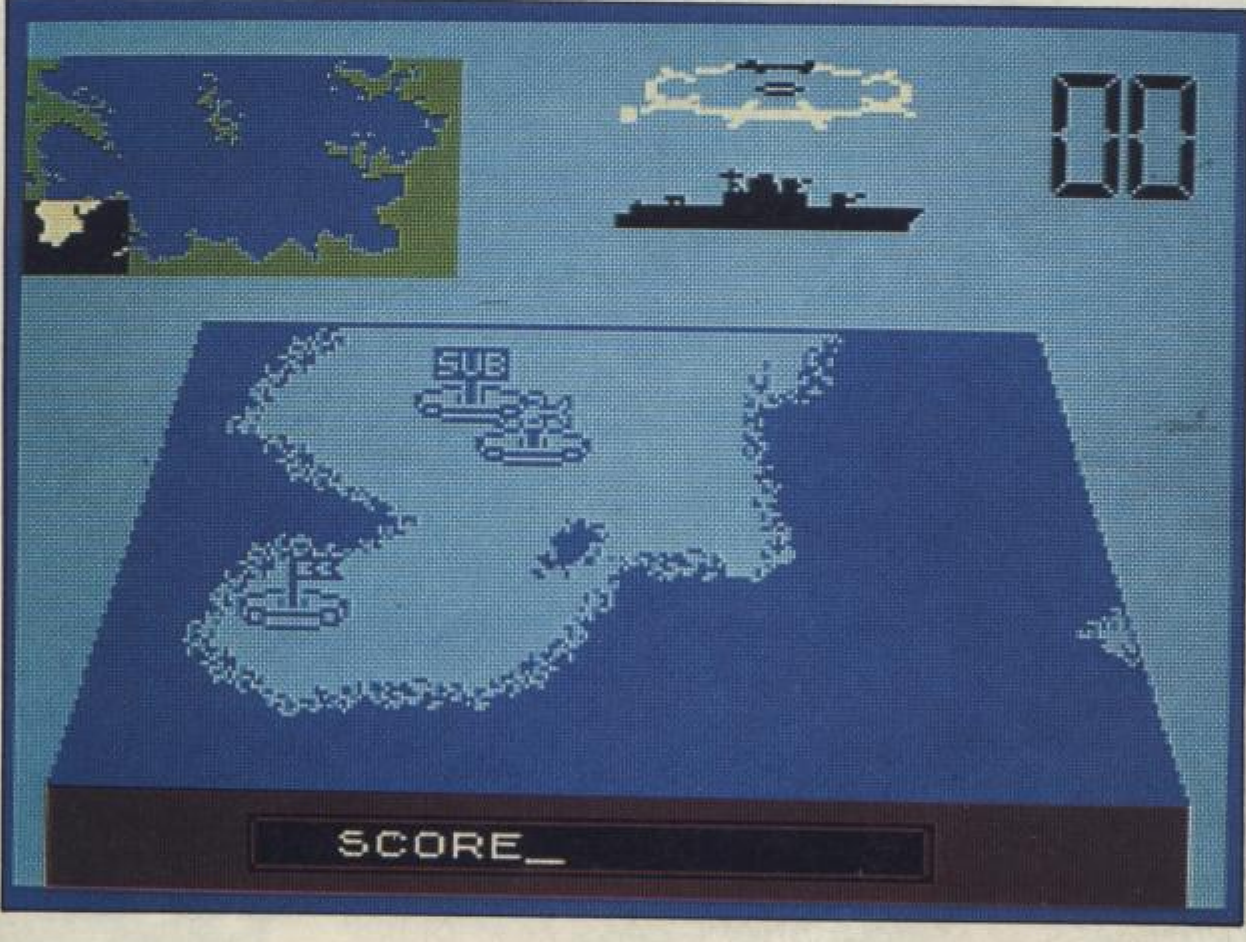
Any damage to your own vessel is indicated by a red section of the ship's silhouette on the map screen. This damage can be rectified by docking with a repair ship. A flag symbol on the map screen indicates its position which is changed when repairs have been undertaken.



▶ The enemy below – and the sub just escapes a lethal depth charge attack

PAUL

" Arranged in a very similar way to Footballer Of The Year **(also by Gremlin),** Convoy Raider **is a few sub-games brought together by a common theme. As with FOTY, all the graphics are realistically drawn and well coloured, but none of them show any real originality. The sub-games are quite fun to play, but none has enough depth to create any strong addictive qualities. The fun of playing** Convoy Raider **is short lived – but good while it lasts. "**



▶ The map screen from *Convoy Raider*

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, L/. up/down, Enter to fire
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Use of colour: varied, sensible and generally attractive
Graphics: good detail and of reasonable size
Sound: a few spot FX
Skill levels: one
Screens: five
General rating: an interesting collection of games that doesn't quite add up to a great game and with limited appeal

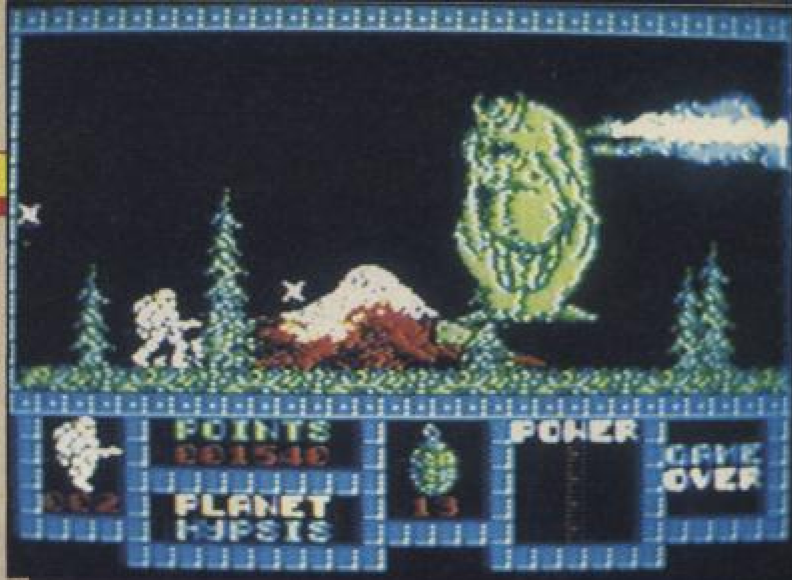
Presentation	60%
Graphics	69%
Playability	56%
Addictive qualities	54%
Overall	56%


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MERELY MANGRAM PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!



▶ As he faces the fat green lumox, could it be *Game Over* for our hero?

SURVIVING is the name of the game, literally in the case of the graphically attractive newie from **US Gold**. *Survivor* (£7.95) was written by Topo Soft, a Spanish company. I don't know whether the purple prose of the inlay stems from its hot Mediterranean blood or from the colder hype climes of Brum – 'Floating somewhere in space, circling a long dead planet is a huge spaceship loaded with life forms . . . creeping along the walkways, a solitary creature fights for its own survival. The creature is the end product of a million years of evolution of a dying world' – but eat your heart out Arthur C Clarke!

You're the creature, endeavouring to perpetuate your race. Among the 142 ornate locations lie ten pods which should be placed within incubators. Depositing pods replenishes energy levels, but nibbling on one of the little engineers roaming the ship will do just as well. A cross between *Alien* and one of Jeff Minter's expectorating camels, the creature's defence is acid saliva, which it spits at anything looking remotely harmful. (Kano airport in northern Nigeria used to boast a stationary camel that chewed cud all day long, cunningly ejecting the smelly stuff from the side of its mouth at disembarking passengers. I throw this in as a mere, but interesting, aside, and to say that whatever Mr Minter may think, spitting camels are not nice).

Ocean's big four for the summer certainly offer a better prospect than the weather (though it's hot and clammy as I write). Stickiest, and certainly the sweatiest, will be *Renegade*. A lot more work has been done on the game since I last saw it. The Amstrad version is complete (and looks just like the coin-op original), but on the Spectrum it is, if anything, slightly better. Why sweaty? Well after all the fuss over Palace's *Barbarian* . . .

Then there's *Athena*, which is most certainly not about buying cards from a well-known and hideously trendy gift shop, but a conversion from the SNK arcade coin-op. Set against a mythological backdrop of demons and bizarre creatures, you play gorgeous pouting Athena, a rampaging goddess with a penchant for smashing the scenery to bits in search of new armour. 'Stunningly addictive,' says Ocean, but we'll check it out next month.

Also from SNK comes *Tank* – Yo! Hell on the highway! Armoured arcade action! Hut! Get down, this is def! Take the Field Commander in his tank across jungles, swamplands and deserts and . . . what have I forgotten? – oh yes, kill everything in sight.

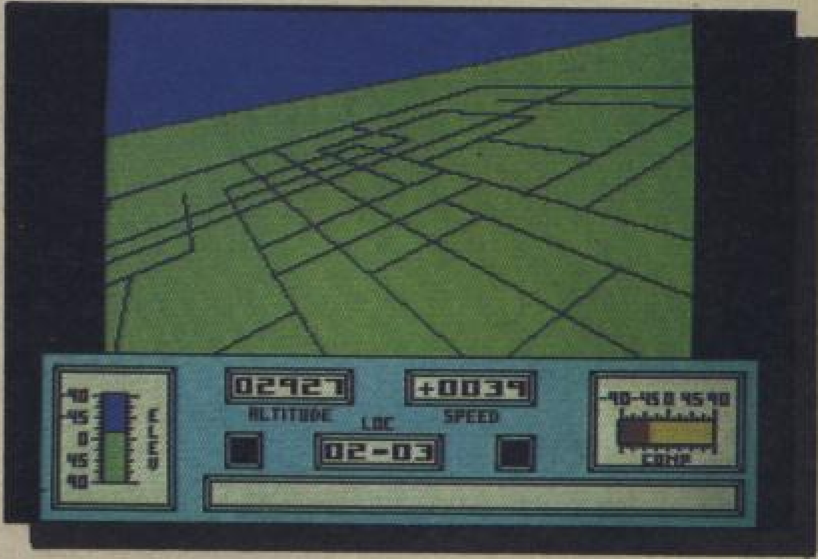
And then, before you've even got started, it's *Game Over* (the one with the ad containing naughty bits some magazines have been covering up). It's the second Dinamic game to be published by Ocean. The action takes place in a far off galaxy where a once-loyal Lieutenant has joined rebel forces to fight against his cruel Queen. His mission is to destroy the Queen's domain and end her purple rain. It begins in the planet's prison where the loyal lefty secures essential minerals and destroys the place, then moves into the jungle before he reaches and infiltrates the Queen's palace to blow it to smithereens.

Of the four, I'd put my money firmly on *Renegade* which is, simply, a disgracefully fun game. However, it's also in a more advanced state than the others, much more so than Denton's *Tibet* for Ocean, a game so long in the developing to date that it'll only ever be for the 128. Still, to tide you over until the full reviews, take a look at the screen shot of *Game Over* and see if you can decide who that fat green lumox is on the right-hand side. Suggestions on a postcard to: Just Who Is This Robin Candy Lookalike? Comp . . .

And talking of Mr Candy, *Mercenary* from Novagen is just about to be revealed on the Spectrum. This Paul Woakes creation has taken ages to arrive after receiving acclaim in all its other incarnations. A 21st century soldier of fortune crash-lands on the planet Targ, where he becomes embroiled in the continuing conflict between two forces – the Palayars and the Mechanoids. The objective is simply to escape the planet alive. You can fly in a variety of craft and explore Targ's mysterious underground complexes, collecting useful objects to aid your quest.

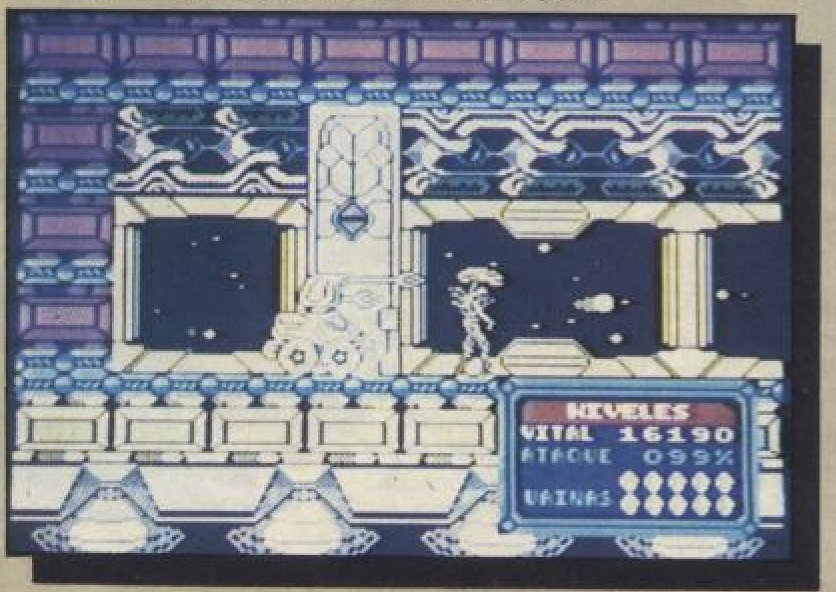
Targ is huge, and exploration is essential. The enthralling movement of the vector graphics on the other machines has been an essential quality of the game – and Novagen say the Spectrum version is no different.

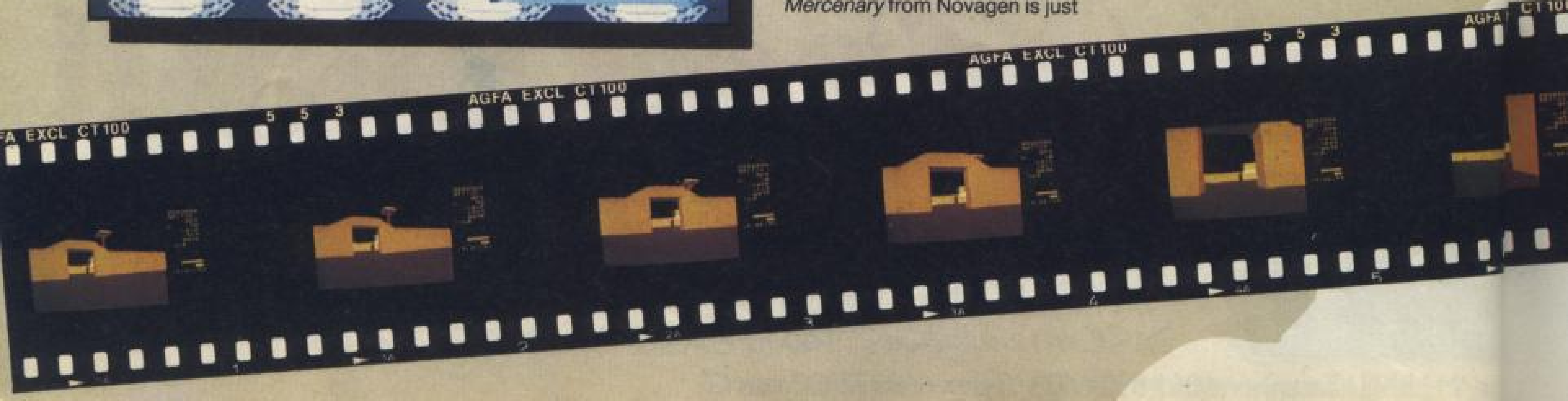
Carefree, mobile, and lethal, the software industry's answer to Bonnie and Clyde, Michael Baxter and Sarah Donnovan, recently held a party to celebrate, amongst other things, the advent of *Grand Prix Simulator* by Code Masters. Inspired by the coin-op *Super Sprint* (to which, incidently, Activision have the rights), it's a

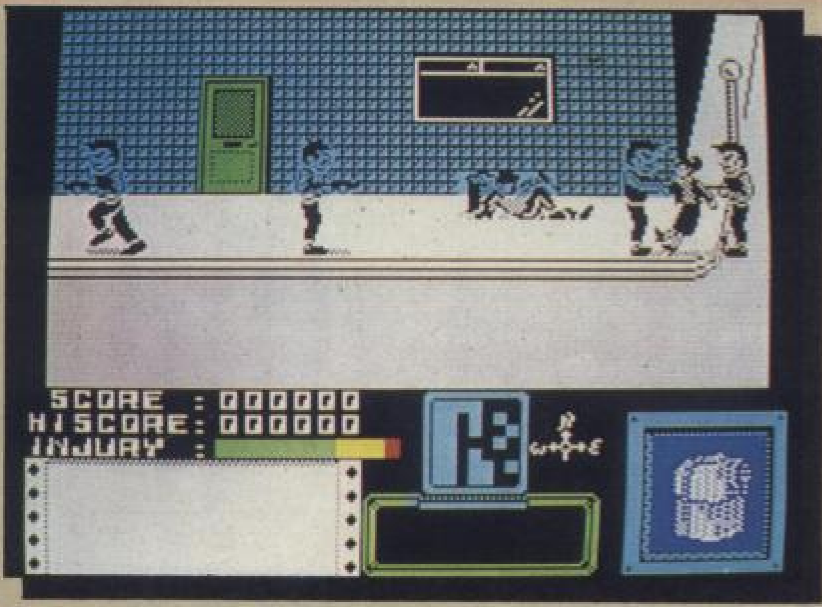


▶ High above Targ, the terrain below suggests the mammoth size of the game

▶ The Survivor hasn't an engineer in sight for a midday snack







▶ A girlie gets mugged and rapped over the head, but she needn't worry, Paul Kersey's third *Death Wish* is coming to her rescue

one- or two-player race around a track viewed from overhead. Originally on the Amstrad, it shot to number one in the charts.

With 14 levels of difficulty it's bound to keep you up into the early hours of the morning. Full review next month – hopefully.

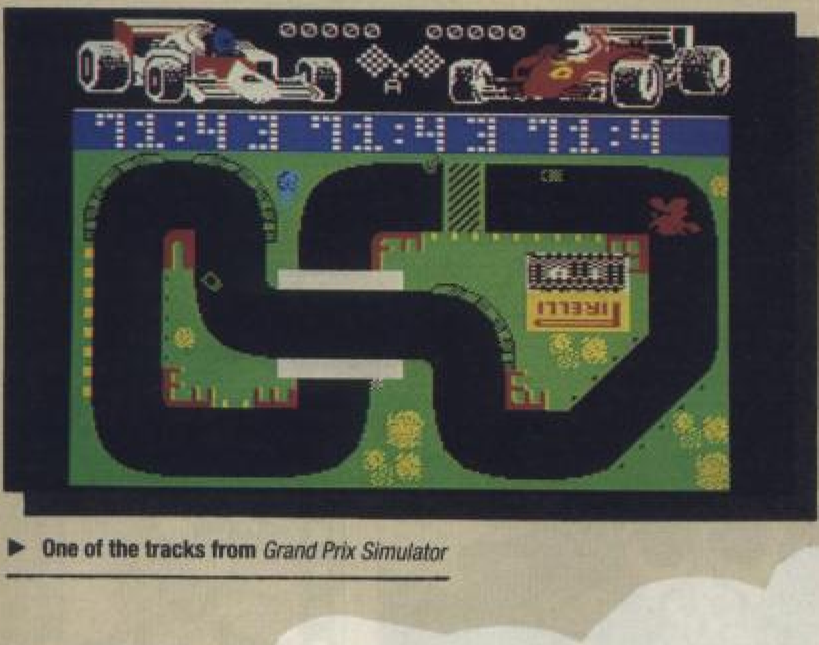
For those with Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker's* humour (like Mike Dunn, who thinks headbagds tied round the wrist are pretty neat) *Mirrorsoft*'s autumn release should be right up your street. Called *Moon Strike*, it features your archenemy Professor Humphrey Bogus, inventor of the digital teabag (and, incidently, a relative of another well-known archenemy, Dr Blitzen, from two previous Mirrorsoft games). He's just come up with this doobrie called a Tachyon Vortex, parked it on the far-side of the moon and, like any self-respecting mad scientist, intends to destroy the world with it. You might think this would be good enough a reason to enter the fray, but in fact your real purpose is to beat up Bogus for the terrible things he said about your grandmother.

Moon Strike is a vertically scrolling, shoot-'em-up from the New Zealand team of Binary Innovation, and stars pizzas and coins as the opposition – there's also a cameo appearance by Mona Lisa. Can't say fairer than that.

Gremlin, after playing around with cute characters such as Bounder, Thing and Monty Mole have now gone hard and mean three times over in *Death Wish III*, their big summer release. Licensed from the ubiquitous film starring Charles Bronson as Paul Kersey, New York's vigilante de-worms the Big Apple.

By the fact that he's armed with a 475 Wildey Magnum, pump-action shot gun, machine gun, rocket launcher and a mean mouth you can tell he's no wimp and means trouble. Gangster style shootings mount as he wanders the streets, but shooting at the local cops isn't wise, they start having wishes for death for him. Kersey's greatest ally is his unshakable belief that the fate of decent, clean-living, Twinky-buying Americans is in his hands – but so's the multitude of weapons with which he executes his death wish.

From mean streets to cuddly wildlife parks, the setting for *Yogi Bear*, **Piranha**'s first cartoon ▶



▶ One of the tracks from *Grand Prix Simulator*

FEEL FREE

FREESCAPE (DRILLER)

Incentive Software — *September*

For once this is a preview of a technique and not, strictly speaking, of a game. When it arrives sometime in September, the game will be *Driller*, but it's the amazing new 3-D technique called *Freescape*, which Incentive's programmers have been slaving away over since last September, that makes the game possible, and you can see some evidence of how it works for the first time, here in CRASH. But a warning – the screen shots seen here are from an Amstrad, simply because that's the most advanced version as yet. Incentive's Ian Andrew says that the Spectrum will look very much the same however.

***Freescape* is described as using 'walk through filled three-dimensional graphics. The playing areas are all held in an astonishingly tiny amount of memory, thanks to advanced compression techniques, and they exist in a very real space. As you move through the landscapes of walls, buildings and objects, everything is displayed in real perspective as you would see it if you were really there. Walking through a doorway takes you inside a building. As you go through you can 'pan' up to see the door lintel sweeping over your head, you can look round, see steps and climb them (unless the ceiling's too low, when you bump your head and have to crouch down), turn back at the top and see the door you came through.**

***Freescape* allows for two modes of transport, a tank for low-level trundling, or, if you reach a hangar, open the doors and dock with the aircraft, you can fly over the landscapes, banking, turning and swooping with enormous freedom.**

On-screen telltales inform of angle of view, elevation and movement steps. Movement can be in very large steps, or ones so tiny that the view changes almost imperceptably. Calculations indicate an almost limitless number of separate views are possible – certainly billions and billions, making the 32,000 of *Lords of Midnight* seem like a six-screen platform game. All these views mean that movement speed is restricted, although it's much faster than, say, *The Sentinel*, but Ian's confident that by launch time, they will have improved even that considerably. As it is, it's very effective and generates a tremendous atmosphere.

***Driller* itself is still under development, but it should put in an appearance at the PCW Show in September. More details when we have them, in the meantime we'll leave you with an example of how the perspective changes as you enter the gateway of the demo world of *Freescape*.**



Enter the world of FREESCAPE, through the archway, into the inner square – and then you see the tower – you approach the tower, and look up, awestruck by its sheer size, reaching to the heavens. Now you are trapped in a new three-dimensional reality . . . Wow.

licence. Cartoon characters haven't always come across too well on the computer – we've had a disappointing Asterix, a pretty, but uninspiring Rupert, and Fred Flintstone only raised a few chortles. Perhaps Piranha will finally delight . . . Playing Yogi, true to the cartoon series, you travel the wilds of Jellystone Park raiding grub from picnic baskets while avoiding that familiar plague, Ranger Smith, who's out to stop your greedy antics.

There's not only the Ranger to contend with, but also the devilish map which includes many hidden passages – some helpful, some not. The game's ultimate object is to rescue your little buddy Boo-Boo, who's been captured (although I'm not too sure who by yet). If you want to be one of the first to save Yogi's lil' pal then look out for a smarter than the average competition next month.

Finally, there's **Quicksilva**'s first major release of the year, *The Tube* (£8.95), which has been done by Gannon Designs up in Scotland. No, it's not a licensed version of the infamous TV music programme with an animated Jools swearing his way through garbled introductions (though there's a game for you . . .), it's a fast, scrolling shoot-'em-up set in a tube. Argus say the Spectrum hardware has been pushed to its limits with *The Tube*'s many new features which have been incorporated in an innovative way.

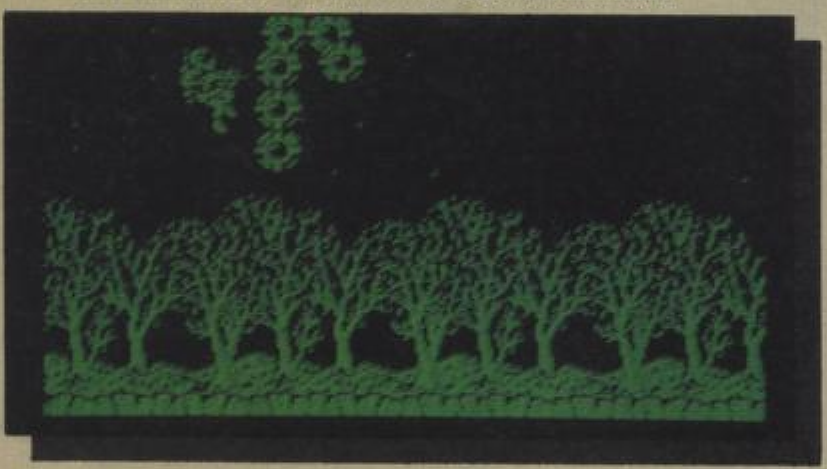


► **On the hunt – Yogi for food (and Boo-Boo, in that order), Ranger Smith for greedy bears**

One factor it *does* have in common with TV's *The Tube* is music, written by the prolific David Whittaker, who is said to have developed a new system that works on both 48K and 128 versions, using the machines to full effect.

Fast, horizontally scrolling news from **Firebird** says that a biggie shoot-'em-up called *Sidewize* is headed this way on their Gold label. It's been written by the Odin team, and Firebird's Colin Fuidge says, 'It's fantastic shoot-'em-up with 60 trillion sprites, amazing parallax scrolling, and it's the best thing since French style yoghurt.' But what would he know? I've seen several screens in action, and it certainly looks like a powerful piece of software. No release date as yet.

► **Blasting an alien horde over Ludlow forest: *Sidewize* from Firebird**



RELEASE DATES

The following dates are the best release times we have, but are not guaranteed!

SURVIVOR mid-August
RENEGADE end-August
ATHENA end-August
TANK 15 July
GAME OVER 20 July
TIBET no release date
MERCENARY PCW Show
GRAND-PRIX SIMULATOR end-July
MOON STRIKE 10 September
DEATH W:SH III mid-August
MASK no release date
YOGI BEAR no release date
REBEL 24 July
CONVOY RAIDER mid-July
THE TUBE end-July

MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN

STIFFLIP & CO
Palace, £9.99 — *end-August*

***RIGHTO CHAPS!** Listen up! A rather decent game's coming out to bat from the Palace Software chappies back home in Blighty. Called Stifflip & Co.* Written by **Paul Norris** and **Rupert Bowater** of the new programming team **Binary Vision**, previously The Electronic Pencil Company. Spiffing stuff, what.

Stifflip & Co is an icon-driven arcade adventure set in the closing days of the great British Empire – days when only mad dogs and englishmen went out in the midday sun, and not hordes of Club 18-30 holiday makers. Split into two independently loaded sections – *Out for the Count* and *The Final Countdown* – the story follows the adventures of Sebastian Stifflip and his trio of mad-cap followers: Professor Braindeath, Colonel R G Bargie and Miss Palmyra Primbottom.

They've teamed up to defeat the evil Count Chameleon and his frightful Rubbertronic ray, a ray so devastating it could neutralise the starch in winged collars, loosen upper lips, lower moral and sexual standards and, worse, seriously effect the bounce of a cricket ball. The bounder must be stopped.

The player controls all four characters as they interact with one another, solving problems to accomplish the mission. Actions are displayed in traditional comic book fashion, so that when a character moves from one location to another or completes an action the 'page' rolls up and over, or is ripped off, to reveal on the 'page' beneath the consequence of the action.

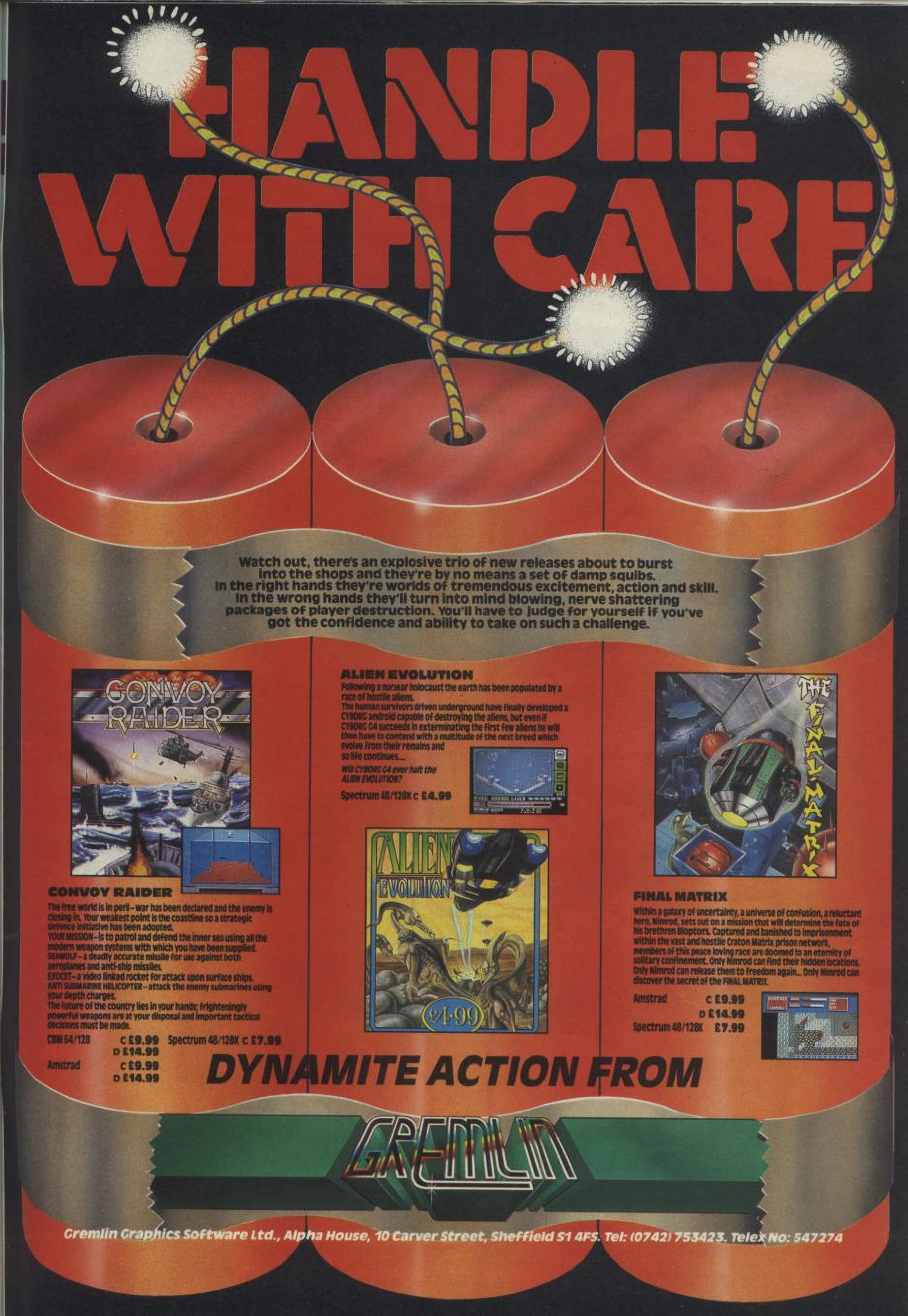
Icons on the right-hand side dictate actions and include **chinwag** – talk and trade with other characters; **fisticuffs** – fight off the Count's henchmen who pop up regularly; **beetle off** – movement; **do one's stuff** – act; **state of play** – take stock; and **change batter** – swap between characters.

If one of the quartet is ambushed the screen flicks to the fight sequence. It's an unusual but entertainingly original fighting technique, but if you don't feel like a dust up, there's an additional screen which allows you to turn tail and run – but what kind of cad would you be to do that?

Stifflip & Co should be ready for review next issue, until then – keep stiff.

► **From the stiffest upper lips in the business to the primest bottoms**




HANDLE WITH CARE
Watch out, there's an explosive trio of new releases about to burst into the shops and they're by no means a set of damp squibs. In the right hands they're worlds of tremendous excitement, action and skill. In the wrong hands they'll turn into mind blowing, nerve shattering packages of player destruction. You'll have to judge for yourself if you've got the confidence and ability to take on such a challenge.
CONVOY RAIDER
The free world is in peril – war has been declared and the enemy is closing in. Your weakest point is the coastline so a strategic defence initiative has been adopted.
YOUR MISSION – is to patrol and defend the inner sea using all the modern weapon systems with which you have been supplied.
SEAWOLF – a deadly accurate missile for use against both aeroplanes and anti-ship missiles.
EXOCET – a video linked rocket for attack upon surface ships.
ANTI SUBMARINE HELICOPTER – attack the enemy submarines using your depth charges.
The future of the country lies in your hands; frighteningly powerful weapons are at your disposal and important tactical decisions must be made.
CBM 64/128 C £9.99 D £14.99
Amstrad C £9.99 D £14.99
Spectrum 48/128K C £7.99
ALIEN EVOLUTION
Following a nuclear holocaust the earth has been populated by a race of hostile aliens.
The human survivors driven underground have finally developed a CYBORG android capable of destroying the aliens, but even if CYBORG G4 succeeds in exterminating the first few aliens he will then have to contend with a multitude of the next breed which evolve from their remains and so life continues....
Will CYBORG G4 ever halt the ALIEN EVOLUTION?
Spectrum 48/128K C £4.99
£4.99
FINAL MATRIX
Within a galaxy of uncertainty, a universe of confusion, a reluctant hero, Nimrod, sets out on a mission that will determine the fate of his brethren Bioptons. Captured and banished to imprisonment within the vast and hostile Craton Matrix prison network, members of this peace loving race are doomed to an eternity of solitary confinement. Only Nimrod can find their hidden locations. Only Nimrod can release them to freedom again... Only Nimrod can discover the secret of the FINAL MATRIX.
Amstrad C £9.99 D £14.99
Spectrum 48/128K £7.99
DYNAMITE ACTION FROM
GREMLIN
Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423. Telex No: 547274



BACK ON THE SCREEN!

MIKE 'SKIPPY' DUNN takes millions of cassettes to task, scrutinises them in infinite detail, and finally comes up with another ON THE SCREEN feature for your delectation, delight, etc etc



THE SENTINEL

There are two pictures based on Firebird's *Sentinel* loading screen this month. There was a little dispute over which was the best, so to compromise I decided on both! The first (that's the one in purple and green) was done ages ago (dug out from the dungeons beneath the Towers, millennia before the Spectrum *Sentinel* was a glimmer in the eye of Geoff Crammond) by S P Thurlow of Stowmarket, Suffolk. Despite the odd (but effective) colour scheme, the overall finish is quite good. The other (red and green, slightly smaller) is the work of Michael Timberlake of Worksop, Nottinghamshire (who included a huge list of other people who helped/hindered him!). Again, a slightly different colour selection from what you might expect, but surprisingly good.





GUNSHIP

Pow! The ominous looming helicopter from Microprose's Commodore flight simulation *Gunship*. The yellow background is a bit bright but the helicopter itself looks very good, well proportioned and shaded. The gentleman responsible for this? Mark Otway, of Shepperton, TW17 8SW.

That's the lot for this month – already. The influx of screens seems to have increased, but more wouldn't go amiss! Remember, the best entries win fame and all that, as well as a full-colour framed and mounted screen dump courtesy of Rainbird, without whom ON THE SCREEN would be neither possible nor plausible.

If you want your tape back, send a stamped self-addressed envelope with your entry. And if you don't want to spend all that money on a separate envelope for the competition below, you can even put it in the same one – but make sure everything's clearly labelled.

Send your entries in the general direction of: Mike Dunn, ON THE SCREEN, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*

WIN TEN BILLION COPIES OF *ART STUDIO*

(well, one)

Crash Competition

One day that nice Clare Edgeley from Rainbird rang up and asked whether I'd like five copies of *Art Studio* to give away. Naturally, I jumped at the opportunity, and I'd accepted before I'd had a chance to realise this would mean having to write a competition. And now I'm sitting here manacled to my desk, trying to think of something for you to do. Oh, inspiration, where are you in my hour of need?

I suppose it'll have to be something nice and easy to save you lot moaning. I know! Seeing as we've just relaunched the ON THE SCREEN feature, we could use a new logo. The winner (that's the single best logo) gets his/her logo used in CRASH and blown up and mounted in full colour by Rainbird – and also gets a copy of *Art Studio*, the hottest thing to happen to computer-screen design since the invention of the cathode-ray tube.

runners-up get an *Art Studio* each.

Tell me your name and address and whether you'd like the 'advanced' *Art Studio* (for the 128, + 2 and + 3) or the standard version (for us poorer minions/people with a 48 or +). Pop it all into a jiffy bag along with your cassette (we'd like the screens saved as SCREEN$) – and, if possible, a printer dump of your screen, to save us time and effort. Don't worry if you can't send a dump, though; it won't affect your chances.

And remember: if you want your entry back, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Send your entries (to arrive by 27 August latest) in the general direction of: Mike Dunn, ON THE SCREEN, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*





ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENT
JETMAN
OUR HERO, HAVING BEEN INFECTED WITH STAR BLIGHT DISEASE, WAS WAITING TO DIE FROM BRAIN ROT BUT YOU CAN'T ROT WHAT YOU AIN'T GOT SO HE'S NOT! NOW HE GOTTA CLEAN HIS LAST WILL'N TESTAMENT OFF THE SPACE SHIP WALL BEFORE HIS PAL, THE MONSTER, WAKES UP!
HAH!
I'M NOT GOIN' DIE!
I'M NOT GOIN' DIE!
NO!
I GOIN' LIVE!
I NOT GOIN' DIE!
I NOT GOIN' SNUFFIT!
SHAME!
I GOIN' LIVE! I GOIN' LIVE! I GOIN' LIVE!
JOY
WOW!
HOOT!
WHOOP!
WHOOP! WHOOP!
LOOKIT ME LIVIN'!
I YAM! I YAM!
I GOIN' LIVE!
ACK!
DISTURB ME NOT
I CAN RUB OUT MY LAST WILL AN' TESTATHINGY NOW! I GONNA LIVE SO I DON'T NEED IT...
MAD
DANG LOONY!
POLISH
NOT SO FAST BOY! YOU GOIN' NEED THAT LAST WILL AND TESTATHINGY IF YOU PERSIST IN ROBBIN' ME OF MY SLEEP!
POLISH
AIEEE
I'M NO ROBBER! I DIDN' ROB YOU! YOU'RE THE ROBBER AROUN' HERE! YOU ROBBED ME OF MY FAB'LOUS EYE OF OKTUP WHEN YOU SWALLERED IT!
HAH!
?
WELL, I HAVEN'T GOT IT NOW, HAVE I?
DOWN THE TUBES NOW,, ISN'T IT?
PRIVVY
KNOCK FIRST
YAS
CHEEK!
HMMM... IT'S DOWN THE TUBES ALRIGHT! IT'S DOWN THE TUBES TO THE SHIPS RE-PROCESSING PLANT...
CHRISTOPHER ROB READS DIS MAG.
...WHERE IT'S MADE INTO PLANT FEED...
... AN' FED TO THE PLURPS IN THE PLURP NURSERY! HAH!
NOW I CAN GET IT BACK...
I CAN HAVE IT STERILISED...
..HOLD IT WITH TONGS!
DUF-DUF-DUF
DUF-DUF-DUF-DUF
HOKAY, YOU PLURPS! STAN' BY YOUR POTS!
WHICH ONE O'YOU PLURPS IS SITTIN' ON MY EYE?
GUESS
?
AIEE! AIEE! IT'S SITTING ON MY EYIEE! HOW'M I GONNA GET IT BACK? HOW? HOW? HOW I? HOW BACK I GEDDIT? HOW? MINE BACK ISN'T IT? HOW? HOW I GOIN' GEDDIT BACK?
?
HOW?
GEDDY BACK NO PROBBO...
PAUL RAFFERTY READS HERE
DA-DEE!
SKWISH
...GETTY RID IS PROBBO!

THE FATE OF A NEW MACHINE

CRASH has received one of the first production +3s – the real thing, not a prototype – and while the micro business struggled with its doubts we put our Technical Editor on the case

INSIDE THE BOX

THE NEW disk system, +3 DOS, should be fast enough for most purposes, though it's a lot slower than third-party systems like Disciple and the Swift Disk. A 32K code file takes 21 seconds to SAVE and 18 to LOAD, less than a third of the Swift's loading speed. Formatting is fast – it takes about 16 seconds to format one 173K side of a three-inch disk. The RAM disk of the original 128 is still present; the syntax to operate it has changed for the better, but the capacity has fallen from 74K to 58K.

Despite the extra disk drive and printer port, the +3 is simpler internally than the +2. There's very little left of the original Spectrum design, apart from the minor bugs in the ROM. It seems they've all been carried over from the +2 (except the NMI bug, which sports a one-byte correction).

Both Sinclair logic arrays have been replaced by a single 'flat pack' chip, as used on the Amstrad PCW word processor. The 128K of memory has been squashed into four 64Kx4-bit chips. The nonstandard drive is identical to the unit in CPC and PCW Amstrads, and you can plug in a DMP- 2000 printer or FD-1 second drive – both of which were originally made for the CPC range.

The +3 is Alan Sugar's quick and dirty answer to the home market, and it kills the CPCs stone dead. +3 DOS is a souped-up version of AMSDOS, but it hasn't been linked into the Spectrum's streams. That means you can't use sequential or random-access files from ZX BASIC, even though there's 4K of unused code space in the DOS ROM.

The +3's 64K ROM also holds a set of diagnostic hardware tests. You can get at these by pressing RESET and BREAK, to call up the 128's TV setup display, and then pressing two groups of keys simultaneously: QAZ and PLM. You need a printer and special test disk to make the most of these routines, but they're fun to play with and should help retailers sift out faulty machines.

I expect the +3 circuit board, less disk controller, will be used in future +2 machines to take advantage of the simplified logic circuitry. There's already a connection-point for an internal cassette drive, which could take the place of the +3's disk. A version with built-in tape and external disk drives would also be practical.

+3 DOS works happily from cassette, but the machine doesn't come with a tape lead – you need two mono jacks connected to a stereo one. Maybe this is Amstrad's way of encouraging the release of new programs on disk, but there's a vicious circle there.

The +3 doesn't let you transfer the majority of games to disk from protected cassettes, yet software houses won't supply games on disk till lots of machines have been sold.

Several firms hope to break the deadlock with 'magic button' copying add-ons, despite the lack of some Spectrum edge-connector signals which previous copiers have relied upon. Even then, there could be trouble copying programs which use new CP/M 64K RAM configurations, as there's no ROM space for a copying device to put its own code in.

The +3 circuit board will doubtless be redesigned soon, as there are three bodges on the back of the board. Two capacitors, three diodes and a resistor have been tacked on to coax the machine into reliable operation.

Several signals have vanished from the edge connector. The video and colour-difference lines have gone, though you can still hook up an RGB monitor through the Peritel socket, and a Composite one by clipping wires onto the circuit board, as explained in TECH TIPS Issue 28.

The nine-volt and five-volt supplies have gone, as have the ROMCS and IORQGE lines used by some add-ons. As the manual puts it, 'there is no guarantee that a device which ran correctly on a Spectrum 48K will run on a +3.'

The +3 works; it's well-documented and professionally-made. But other Spectrum disk systems offer better performance at a similar upgrade price.

SIMON N GOODWIN

MONEY MAKES THE DISK GO ROUND

THE friendly, homely high street is a tough place. In the micro business, some 15 chains are racing for your cash; none can afford to back a loser.

And despite its Spectrum pedigree, the +3 is given only an outside chance.

Few high-street chains have followed Boots and decided to stock the +3. Sean Willis, who chooses computers for all W H Smith shops, is dubious about the +3's prospects – there won't be a high demand, he says. 'It's fairly specialised, possibly overpriced.'

Nearly all the big chains' computer buyers agree £249 is too much for the +3. It's too close to the price of machines like the Atari ST and Amiga, they believe, and shoppers with hundreds to spend will go for those.

But the micro industry is sure it'll come down to £199 in the autumn, when Christmas present-buying is big business. Dropping below the £200 mark would bring the +3 within many more people's spending range, and the increased sales could outbalance the lower price.

'If the price came down to £199 I'd be more enthusiastic; if it came down to £150 I could move the +3 in quantity,' says an independent retailer, Julian Musgrave of Games World in London.

Of course there's no Spectrum without software, so shops and software houses are playing a waiting game – who'll commit themselves to the +3 first?

Already two major houses, Activision and Ocean, are positive.

But Domark's Mark Strachan speaks for the majority when he explains 'we'll sit on a fence for a while. If it sells well, we'll probably convert some of our original games onto disk, but we won't write for the +3 specifically.'

Another problem: the three-inch disks are expensive, which may rule out single-game budget releases.

Still, if the new machine proves popular the software houses will be grinding out +3 games to feed the market. And Amstrad boss Alan Sugar reputedly expects to sell half a million +3s in the UK and Europe.

high demand,' says one high-street chain's computer expert. 'They're a strong, aggressive company. And I'm sure if Alan has stated half a million they'll go a long way toward achieving that.'

BARNABY PAGE
with BEN STONE



► The object of all this attention

MONSTER IN THE CLOSET

With **Donald Grant**
Label: **VPD**
Certificate: **15**
Running time: **1 hour 26 minutes**

In the small Californian town of Chestnut Hills, an ordinary day is halted by a piercing scream which cuts the country air. A blind man is found dead in his own bedroom closet.

Not only that, his trusty Alsatian dog is found hung on the inside of the closet door – and both bodies are pierced with two puncture marks. Clearly these are no ordinary murders!

A few days later, miles away in San Francisco, newspaper obituary writer Dick Clarke (Donald Grant) sets out after his first big story: The Chestnut Hill Closet Murders. Three people have been killed by this unknown being, a monster within the closet.

Clarke sets out on the trail of the vicious killer, a hideous seven-foot creature whose interests include music, chocolate bars and, of course, big deep closets. Also on the trail are Dr Pennyworth (Henry Gibson), a mad scientist whose interest in the monster is purely musical; the local sheriff (Claude Atkins), whose most lethal weapon is the tobacco he chews; and Donald Moffat, with the backing of the entire US Marine Corps.

ROGER

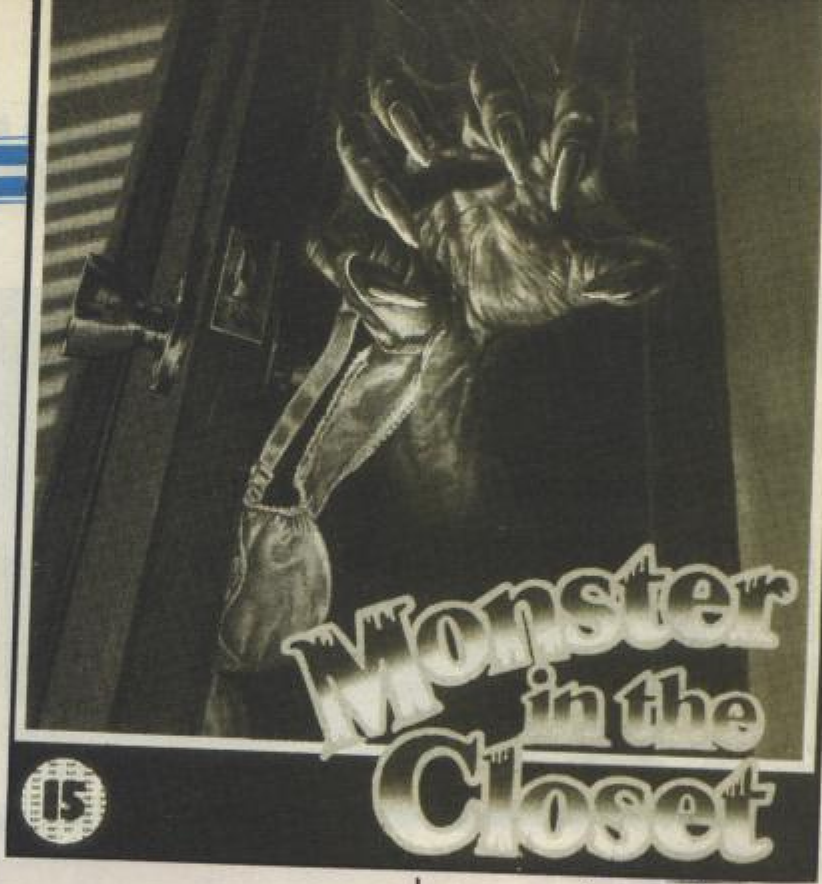
" The great game to play while watching Monster In The Closet **is 'spot the film', for it's a parody of just about every horror and SF movie ever made** (King Kong, War Of The Worlds, Creature From The Black Lagoon, Psycho, Close Encounters). **At its worst the plot is thin and silly, at its best the parodies are fun and sometimes even exciting. And this film has to have the most ludicrous 'scientific' ending ever. Neither great, nor a waste of time . . . "**

68%

MIKE

" For the first quarter of an hour Monster In The Closet **treads the very thin line between a serious, poor horror movie and an amusing parody. But there's a point where the film's intentions become clear, and from then on keeping a straight face is out of the question!** Monster In The Closet **deserves a huge success in the hire shops; unlike most comedy videos it's every bit as screamingly hilarious second time round. "**

95%



DOM

" With Airplane **splattered all over the inlay I was expecting a tremendously funny film. Sadly** Monster In The Closet **doesn't go as far with any of its comic situations as the classic** Airplane **movies. Most of the jokes are implied, and therefore will only appeal to people with an extremely warped sensed of humour. The monster is absolutely gruesome though, and Donald Moffat is excellent as a maniac Marine leader. "**

52%

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

With **Daniel Jordano** and **Matthew Penn**
Label: **Guild Home Video**
Certificate: **15**
Running time: **1 hr 42 mins**

There's nothing in New York City for Danny, Spikes and Silk now they've left high school. Spikes (Matthew Penn, brother of Sean, hence **Madonna's brother-in-law**, strike a light) dreams of basketball; Silk (Leon W Grant) is, well, just about willing to take a *middle*-management job in the music business; Danny (Daniel Jordano) is full of bright ideas for a big-business future; all three face lifetimes as janitors or delivery boys.

Rummaging in his mum's things one day, Danny discovers his family has inherited an old hotel in rural Pennsylvania, and he persuades her to let him take it over. His new dream: to convert the run-down mansion into a hotel of teenagers, for teenagers, and by teenagers, where the disco shall have no end.

But the three heroes and their hangers-on – slum schoolmates, a wise old hermit they find living in the hotel (really!), and a beautiful but innocent farm girl (really! Mary B Ward) – are up against the grim interests of industry. A developer wants to build a 'chemical reprocessing facility' (ie toxic-waste dump) on the site of their hotel, and will go to any lengths to get them out.

So, while the 'city trash' dig and clean and build and polish – and argue among themselves – the police and townspeople plan to get rid of them. The scene is set for a nasty battle, the innocent stand to lose, and only the quick thinking of the city streets can get them through the maze of violence and

DOM

" Playing For Keeps **suffers from the psychosis of teen movies: an unrelenting upbeat nostalgia, which makes the film feel like a desperate attempt to convince middle-aged movie-makers that they too had this easygoing, macho teenage life and looked this good. But like the best teen films it's friendly, poking gentle fun rather than mocking the naive kids and the wonderfully ugly characters of small-town America, some caught in single shots or lines. And** Playing For Keeps **is at best entertaining and at worst HARMLESSLY dull: full of energy, a bit slow-witted perhaps, but still one of the nicest films on the block. "**

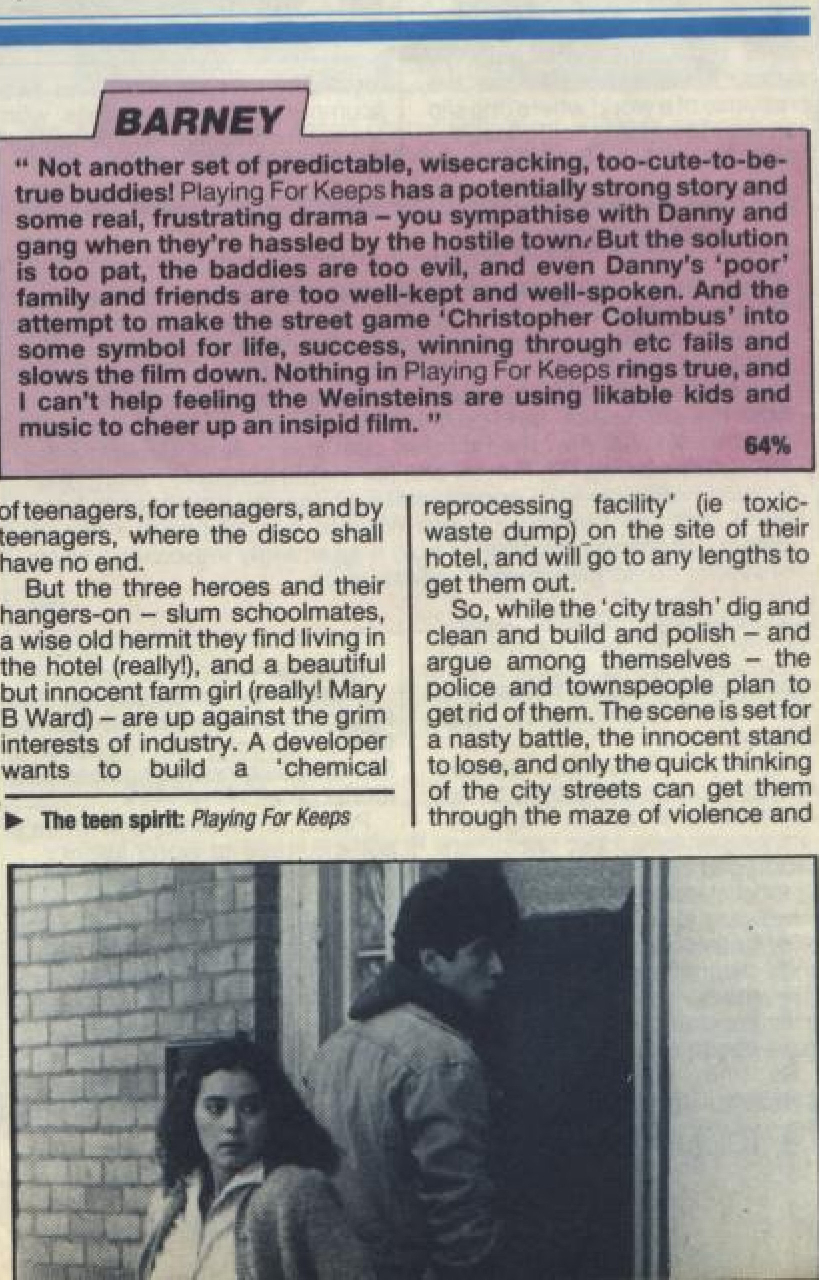
71%

BARNEY

" Not another set of predictable, wisecracking, too-cute-to-be-true buddies! Playing For Keeps **has a potentially strong story and some real, frustrating drama – you sympathise with Danny and gang when they're hassled by the hostile town. But the solution is too pat, the baddies are too evil, and even Danny's 'poor' family and friends are too well-kept and well-spoken. And the attempt to make the street game 'Christopher Columbus' into some symbol for life, success, winning through etc fails and slows the film down. Nothing in** Playing For Keeps **rings true, and I can't help feeling the Weinsteins are using likable kids and music to cheer up an insipid film. "**

64%

▶ **The teen spirit:** *Playing For Keeps*





harassment . . .

Playing For Keeps is a semimusical: Phil Collins, Pete Townshend, Chris Thompson, Arcadia, Julian Lennon, Loose Ends and Sister Sledge are on the soundtrack. The film, written and directed by Bob and Harvey Weinstein, opened in the cinemas in January and visited the top of the charts before this release on video.

PAUL

" In the first few minutes I thought this was going to be a really naff video. But parts are quite jolly, and though the plot and acting are all miles below par, and all the jokes have been played ten million times before, they still made me laugh, which in the middle of my exams is no mean feat! I doubt Playing For Keeps **will make it to the top of the charts – the old, old story could only appeal to a demented five-year-old – but it deserves to. "**

70%

WHOOPS APOCALYPSE

With **Loretta Swit, Peter Cook** and **Rik Mayall**
Label: **Virgin**
Certificate: **15**
Running time: **1 hour 28 minutes**

For years Britain has ignored the tiny Caribbean colony of Santa Maya – then the neighbouring dictatorship Maguadora decides to march in and take over. From such small beginnings starts a process which will lead to the end of the world!

Whoops Apocalypse is the movie version of the popular TV series. It savagely satirises the craziness of a world where one slip can lead to nuclear holocaust. It's noisy, fast-moving and extremely rude in parts as it tells the story of mammoth incompetence and intrigue.

American President Barbara Adams (Loretta Swit) tries to act as mediator in British/Maguadoran peace talks, but these are sabotaged by an ace international terrorist, Lacrobat. Armed with a disguises, an Alsatian trained to bite British diplomats' behinds and some paint, Lacrobat guarantees that the American arms suppliers who hired him will make healthy profits.

So the British fleet sails, complete with a fairy-tale favourite royal (Princess Wendy) and two scummy tabloid journalists who are soon consigned to the nearest desert island.



► **Farce by the megaton:** *Whoops Apocalypse*

There they miss out on the fighting, which returns Britain its former territory, but discover a Soviet missile base disguised as a tourist hotel!

Peace is restored and there's nothing more to worry about . . . or is there? The Prime Minister (Peter Cook) starts to blame unemployment on pixies and instigates a programme where 10,000 people with jobs jump off a cliff every week to create vacancies.

Meanwhile the Maguadorans hire Lacrobat to kidnap Princess Wendy during a show for the troops, and threaten to kill her if Santa Maya is not returned to them. On the grounds that it's immoral to spend all that money on nuclear weapons and then not use them, the PM promises retaliatory action.

Now the Maguadoran dictator invokes Russian aid, and the situation escalates to such a degree that even the discovery of Wendy by a bungling squad of gun-happy SAS men, led by Rik Mayall, can't guarantee peace. Things are running out of control as the world prepares for the big bang.

HUNTER S

" How many ways can the world end? Having explored the Middle Eastern path on TV, Whoops Apocalypse **turns to Central America for the big screen, and it shouldn't take much to link the fiction to recent history. Amazingly, given such a chilling topic, this film is usually very funny as it wrings every drop of humour from the politicians' farcical stupidity. A few gags don't come off, but for the most part the talented cast play it dead straight – the exceptions being Rik Mayall and his manic squad of** Young Ones **troops. Fans of the TV original will find enough new here to keep them glued to the screen, and** Whoops Apocalypse **is a clever, comic, terrifying reminder of how a seemingly impossible chain of events could give death the last laugh. "**

73%



► **Rik Mayall leads the SAS to oblivion in** *Whoops Apocalypse*

DOM

" Whoops Apocalypse **is a strange film, ranging from some tremendously funny and clever scenes to a few boring and pointless sketches, like the hotel scene with Alexei Sayle. The most enjoyable few minutes are spent with Rik Mayall and his wacky SAS squad. And it's certainly worth seeing once, just for the unbelievable but possible series of events. "**

75%

PAUL

" Peter Cook and, in a smaller role, Rik Mayall make a terrifying story hilarious in this gag-filled film. The Falklands parallel may make people believe Whoops Apocalypse **is a political lecture, but the story of Santa Maya and Maguadora is really just an excuse for some terrific black humour. "**

79%

CHARLEY HANNAH'S WAR

With **Robert Conrad** and **Shane Conrad**
Label: **Guild Home Video**
Certificate: **15**
Running time: **1 hour 31 mins**

Hardened Florida cop Charles Hannah (Robert Conrad) accidentally kills an innocent teenager during a stakeout. Filled with remorse, he transfers to the Juvenile Division, and with his young sidekick Simms (Christian Falk) and Buck, a retired officer turned private dick (Red West), searches for the dead boy's friend.

He finds 13-year-old Frankie living by petty theft (Frankie is played by Shane Conrad – there are a lot of Conrads in this made-for-TV picture, so watch the credits!).

It turns out Frankie has become embroiled in events beyond himself by nicking an airline bag stuffed with money. This drugs payoff was en route to the local big boss, and suddenly streetwise Frankie is being chased by the two thug couriers and the mobster who wants his cash.

Much of the film is about how tough guy Charley Hannah sets out to earn the respect, and finally affection, of Frankie while keeping him alive and bringing the bad guys to justice.

DOM

" If something like this happened in Britain there would be uproar, but it's America, and they don't even suspend Charley Hannah. As in all American cop films, Captain Hannah is a law unto himself. The setting and action is very Miami Vice**-like, with lots of palm trees, speedboats and slinky swimsuits. The actors are all competent, and there's even a small appearance by Stephen J Cannell (the man who throws the typing paper away at the end of the** A-Team **credits). It's all good action-packed American fun, sadly let down by a very weak and predictable ending. "**

58%

BARNEY

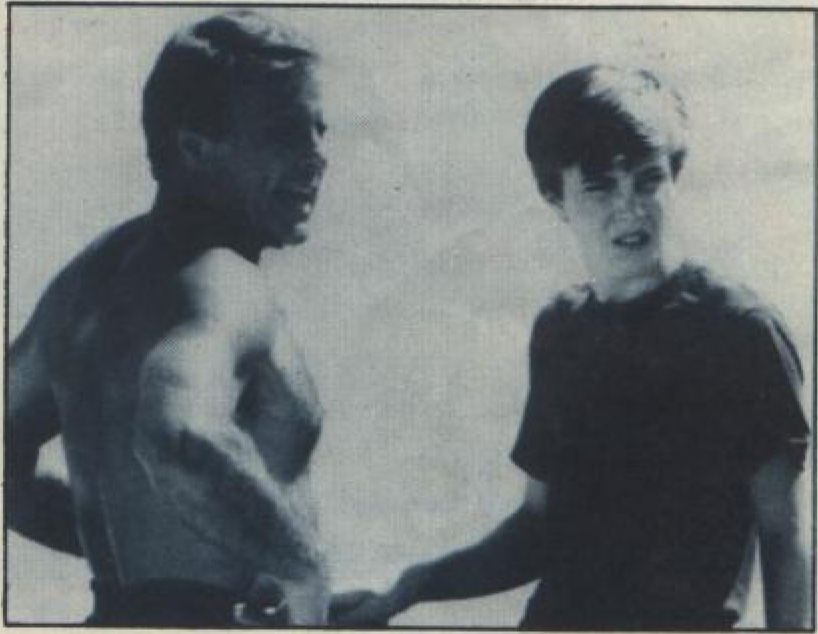
" Charley Hannah's War **opens with a wonderful quarter-hour of atmosphere, setting the scene for a strong story – the script quickly summarising Hannah's character in a brief encounter with a couple of pushers, Jan Hammer's music uniting tragedy and suspense in a hint of the terrible moment to come. But after the plot gets going Charley Hannah becomes just another human movie cop with a mission (note the tacky title), the baddies are just another inexplicably omniscient gang of sneering non-WASPs, the film is exposed as another cheap 'tec job exploiting an emotional situation. "**

52%

ROGER

" It's a soppy story, really quite well told, and with some reasonable but low-key action on the streets and waterways of Fort Lauderdale. What spoils Charley Hannah's War **throughout is the feeling that it's a TV-series pilot, cramping its style and excitement and making it all rather flat. The characters are stereotyped, Hannah standing for uncompromising, decent justice (hard but with heart of gold), Frankie for enterprising, likable but misguided youth (with still a chance of salvation). Not bad TV, perhaps, but hardly a great film. "**

46%



▶ **Sun, sand and shooting: Robert Conrad (left) plays a Florida cop and Shane Conrad (right) a teenage criminal in** *Charley Hannah's War*

LUCAS

With **Charlie Sheen** and **Corey Haim**
Label: **15**
Certificate: **15**
Running time: **1 hour 47 mins**

Lucas (Corey Haim – *Silver Bullet*) is the kind of kid everyone encounters at school, the kind of 14-year-old who makes you cringe at the sound of his name. He's brainy, wears glasses, is interested in classical music more than football and is only half the size of most people. He's a bit different from the usual teenager.

While catching butterflies in the summer holidays Lucas meets up with a ravishing 16-year-old, Maggie (Kerri Green – *Summer Rental*), who's just moved into the area. Attracted to Lucas's strange philosophical and physical qualities Maggie befriends him, looking for guidance through her first year at his school.

But to Lucas their relationship is much more than 'just good friends'. When Maggie starts to get immersed in the usual school activities Lucas feels inadequate. And when Maggie starts going out with the school football captain, played by Charlie Sheen (*Platoon, Red Dawn*), Lucas will do anything to get Maggie's love and attention. He even joins the football team . . .

BARNEY

" Lucas **has a hilarious American-football episode, and Corey Haim is often quite funny as the eponymous 14-and-a-half-year-old – but he's so RELENTLESSLY sweet. Comparisons are dreadfully invidious, and here goes: I could care about the brat in** Charley Hannah's War, **sentimental as it is, because I've met him. But no kid is like Lucas; no hair is so perfectly ruffled, eyes so wondering, wisecracking so cute. And the first scenes of** Lucas, **where the young adolescent spies on girls, are giggly fourth-form smut. "**

33%

DOM

" Lucas **is riddled with stereotypes: the clever wimp (Lucas), the all-American boy (the football captain), the girl divided between the two of them (Maggie), and the bullies who hate Lucas (most of the rest of the cast). Young Lucas starts off as quite a likable wimp, but by the middle of the film he's really irritating with his smart remarks and his sorry little face. The most captivating part of** Lucas **is the last third, especially the very funny football scenes. It ends with a clever twist, and it's kept running by a strong soundtrack. If you cried during** E.T., **give** Lucas **a look. "**

57%

ROGER

" Corey Haim's Lucas **is worthy of an actor of more mature years – his quirky performance illuminates this film from beginning to end, outshining even Charlie Sheen's understated high-school jock. At first I thought I was in for another mid-American teen beat movie, but it isn't, and despite the odd shortcoming in believable situations** Lucas **adds up to far more than the sum of its parts; deeply romantic, funny, final sad-happy tears. It could have been awfully corny, but the actors and spot-on direction turn it into a minor masterpiece underpinned by the angst of puppy love. "**

78%

the crash CHARTS



TOP GAMES AUGUST

The three charts compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games – it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms which live on the results pages and in FRONTLINE to make your voice heard.

If you don't want to carve up your issue of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy the details from the voting forms onto a postcard, or the back of a sealed envelope, and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your vote, there's always the chance of winning a prize. Each month we draw 15 winners from all the voting forms received – five for the HOTLINE, five for the ADVENTURE and five for the STRATEGY chart.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T-shirt is awarded to the first slip drawn from the HOTLINE votes, and another £40 of goodies and a shirt goes to the ADVENTURE and £20 of goodies and a shirt goes to the STRATEGY

Four runners up from each ballot box collect a CRASH T-shirt and a CRASH Hat. So get those votes in to the **CRASH HOTLINE CHART**, **CRASH ADVENTURE CHART** and **CRASH STRATEGY CHART:** *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

The HOTLINE is a Top 20 now, to make room for the invasion of the strategists. Here GAUNTLET seems secure at the top, but HEAD OVER HEELS has wangled its way up four slots, displacing the briefly glorious PAPER BOY. (Doughnuts to him.) In CRASH, everyone is famous for 15 minutes.

£40 worth of software is crawling its way to* Tim Watkin *of Northwich, Cheshire. The well-clad runners-up are* Robert Collier *of Leominster, Herefordshire (on a clear day he can see CRASH Towers);* Louis Rucz *of Budapest, Hungary (not to be confused with Budapest, Shropshire);* Bruce Warman *of Middle Earth, sorry Middlesbrough in Cleveland; and hot buttered* Adam Vaughan *from Whittlebury, near Towcester in Northamptonshire.

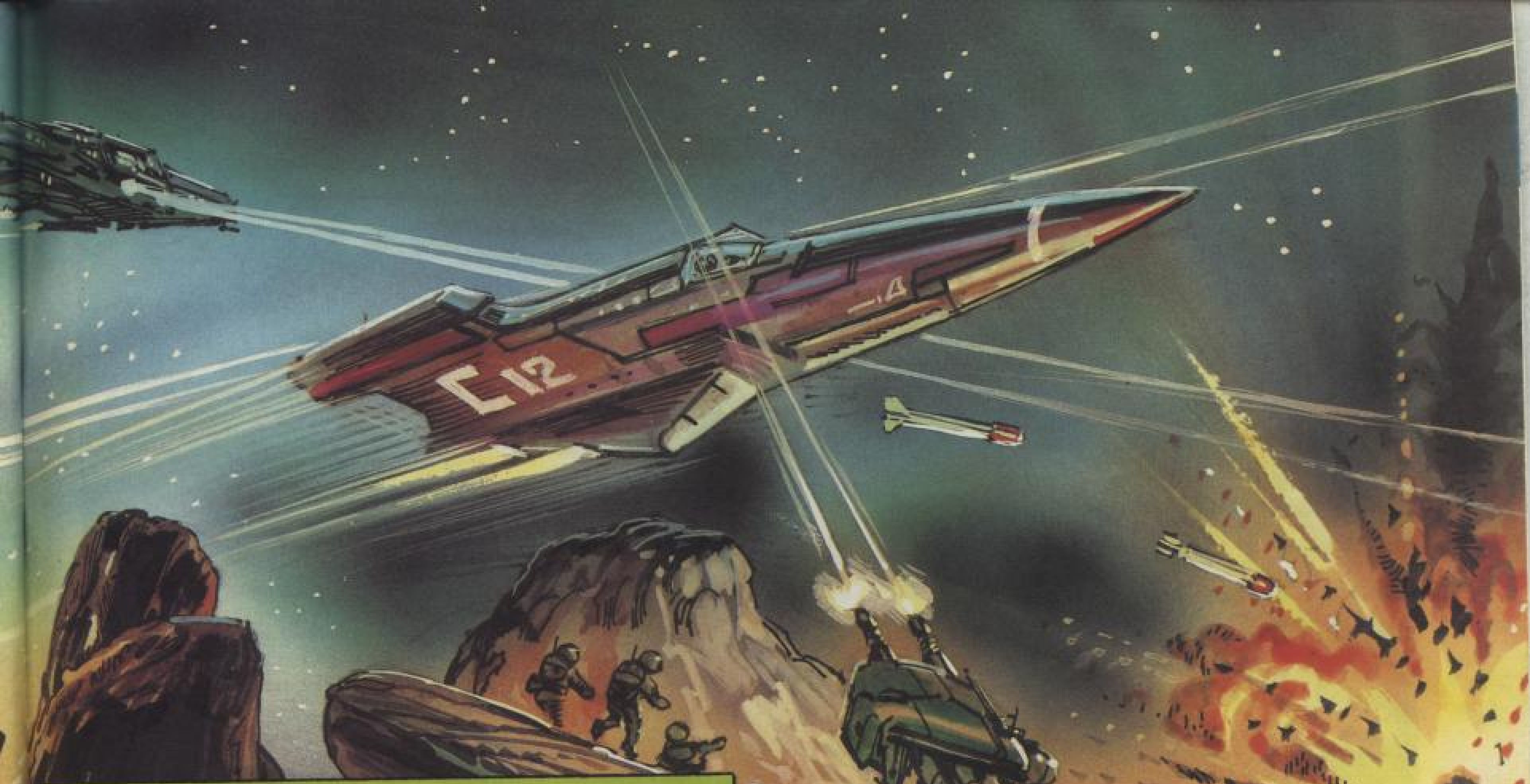
Strategy Top 10

1	**VULCAN**	CCS
2	**REBEL STAR**	FIREBIRD
3	**ARNHEM**	CCS
4	**THEATRE EUROPE**	PSS
5	**DOOMDARK'S REVENGE**	BEYOND
6	**THEIR FINEST HOUR**	CENTURY
7	**TOBRUK**	PSS
8	**GALLIPOLI**	CCS
9	**BATTLE OF BRITAIN**	PSS
10	**NAPOLEON AT WAR**	CCS

Praise CCS and pass the ammunition! There'll only be ten in this chart, because there are comparatively few strategy games around. But the usual prizes are available for a winner and five runners-up. So keep the votes flowing (there's a form in FRONTLINE) – what if they gave a strategy chart and nobody came?

The first of the few is* T R Beadon *of Letchworth, Hertfordshire, who wins this month's £40 worth of software. Runners-up are* Gary Watson *of York;* David Eltringham *of Stockton, Cleveland;* Spencer James *of Swanley, Kent;* Martin Neufeld *of Chideock, Dorset; and* Sally Botting *of Aberdeen.

FREY



Hotline Top 20

1 (1)	GAUNTLET	US GOLD
2 (6)	HEAD OVER HEELS	OCEAN
3 (-)	COBRA	OCEAN
4 (7)	ELITE	FIREBIRD
5 (2)	PAPER BOY	ELITE
6 (11)	MATCHDAY	OCEAN
7 (4)	URIDIUM	HEWSON
8 (9)	STARGLIDER	RAINBIRD
9 (5)	FEUD	MASTERTRONIC
10 (10)	ENDURO RACER	ACTIVISION
11 (-)	THE SENTINEL	FIREBIRD
12 (8)	BOMBJACK	ELITE
13 (29)	ARKANOID	IMAGINE
14 (20)	GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS	ELITE
15 (23)	TOP GUN	OCEAN
16 (12)	THE GREAT ESCAPE	OCEAN
17 (-)	BARBARIAN	PALACE
18 (16)	BATMAN	OCEAN
19 (26)	ALIENS	ELECTRIC DREAMS
20 (27)	TRAPDOOR	PIRANHA

Adventure Top 20

1 (1)	HEAVY ON THE MAGICK	GARGOYLE GAMES
2 (3)	SPELLBOUND	MAD
3 (5)	KNIGHT TYME	MAD
4 (4)	THE HOBBIT	MELBOURNE HOUSE
5 (16)	THE PRICE OF MAGIK	LEVEL 9
6 (2)	THE BOGGIT	CRL
7 (9)	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND
8 (12)	RED MOON	LEVEL 9
9 (8)	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	BEYOND
10 (6)	LORD OF THE RINGS	MELBOURNE HOUSE
11 (21)	FOURTH PROTOCOL	CENTURY HUTCHINSON
12 (11)	GREMLINS	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
13 (20)	MARSPORT	GARGOYLE GAMES
14 (7)	FAIRLIGHT 2	THE EDGE
15 (25)	NEVER ENDING STORY	OCEAN
16 (26)	DUN DARACH	GARGOYLE GAMES
17 (14)	SHADOWFIRE	BEYOND
18 (-)	BORED OF THE RINGS	CRL
19 (23)	DRACULA	CRL
20 (30)	SPIDERMAN	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL

The ADVENTURE chart is down to 20 too. Still, in this life it's quality not quantity that counts . . . No surprises at the summit (are there ever?), but obviously Level 9 has met the Charts Minion's price – so THE PRICE OF MAGIK soars. Magic. Is THE BOGGIT getting bogged down? See next month's exciting episode.

£40 worth of software is – no, NOT winging its way to, being posted in a dull businesslike envelope to – James Lewis *of Redditch, Worcestershire. The runners-up are* Jason Griffin *of Kidderminster, also in Worcestershire;* Anthony O'Brien *of Netherton on Merseyside;* Andrew Parkin *of Sprotbrough, Doncaster; and* Claudio Rivera Redrado *from the well-known Melbourne House outpost Torremolinos, in Spain.*



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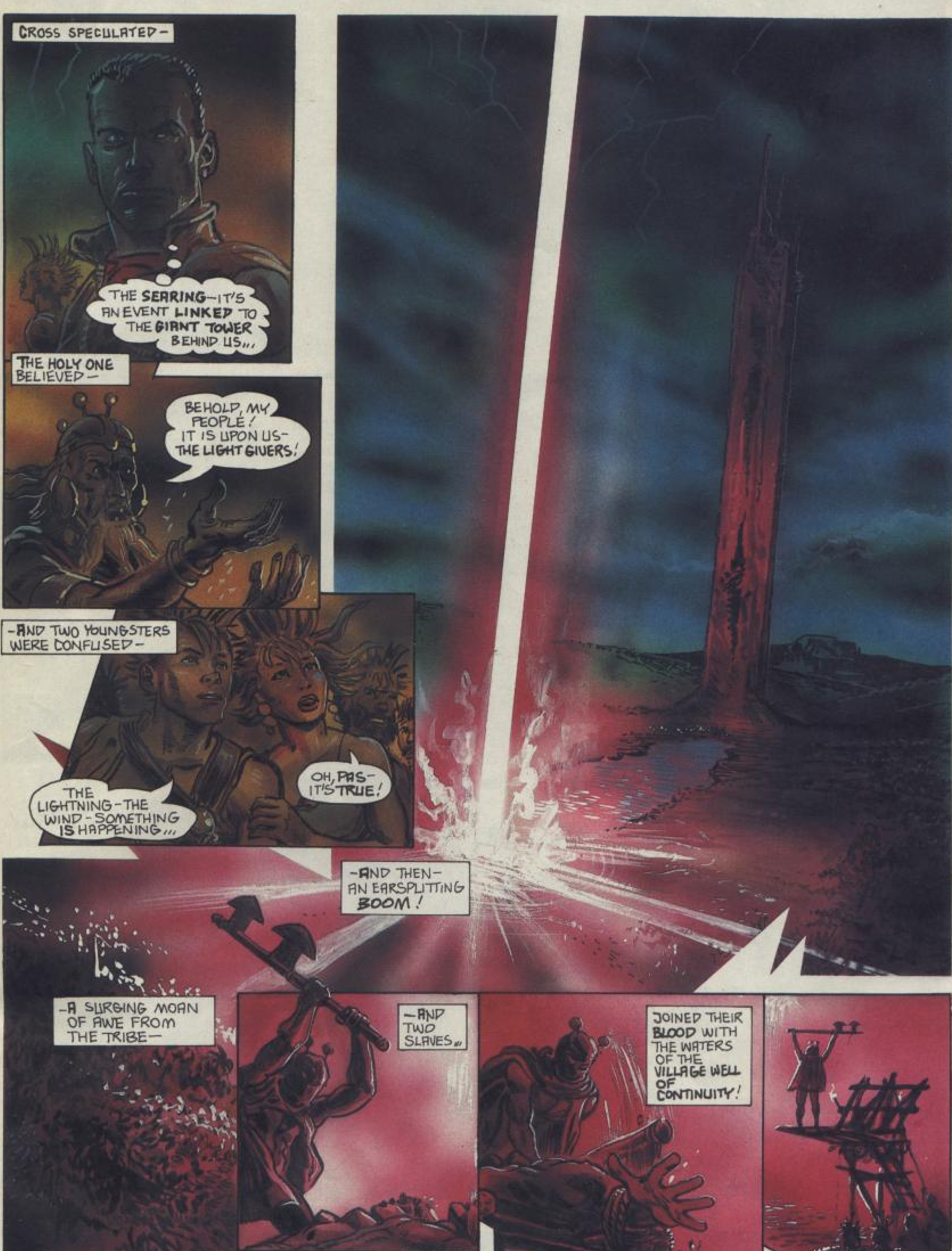
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Update:
Saving young **Pas** and his sister from the clutches of an ancient robot leads **Cross** – part man, part computer, part virus – into the midst of their tribe's ceremonies of the **Searing** and the **Giving** . . .

THE TERMINAL MAN

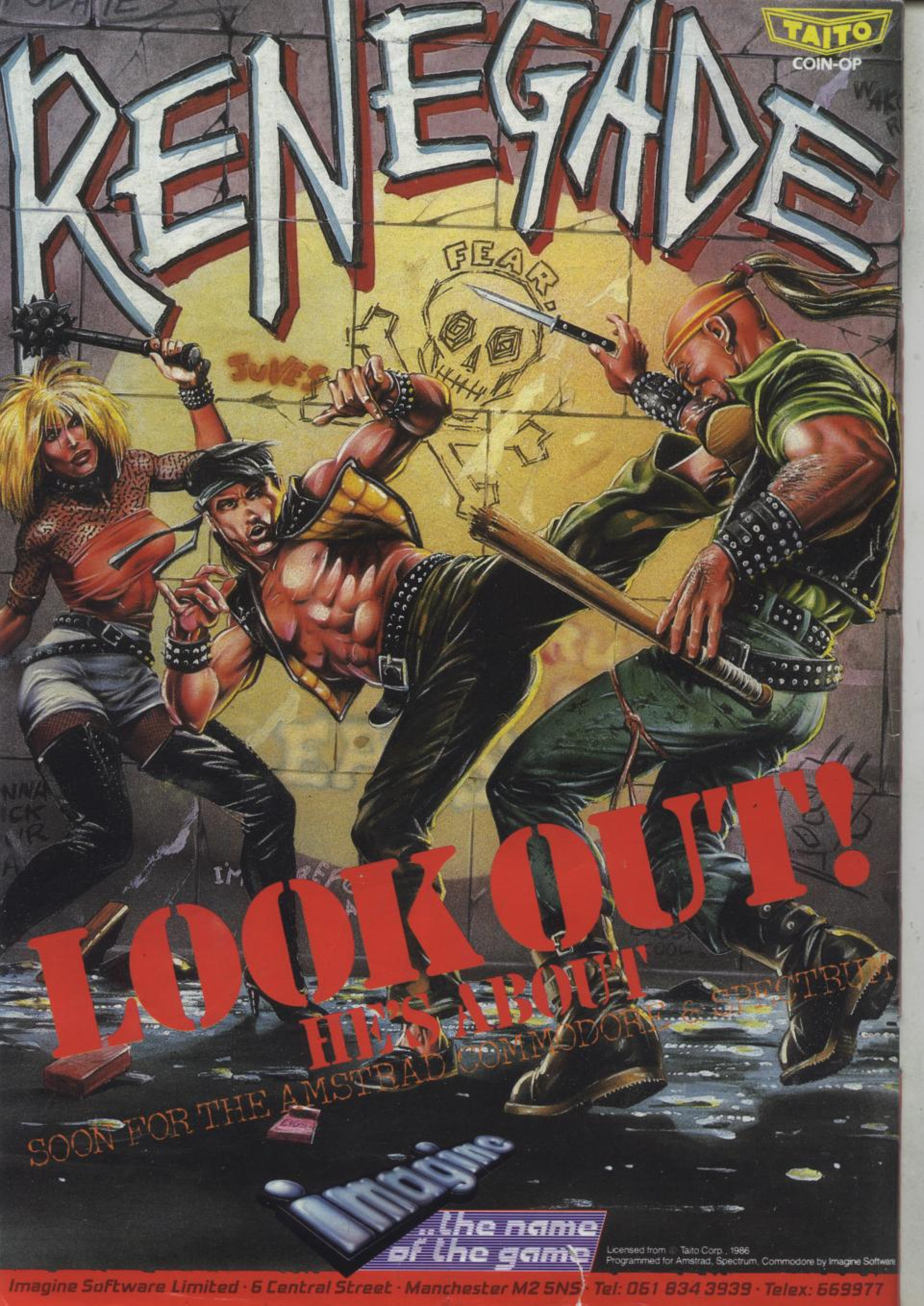




BY OLIVER FREY

Next Month: The Lightgivers


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When you decide to embark on this adventure you will face KAIKAS (mutating kangaroos), ORCOS (fierce monsters of the planet DEDRON), LEISER-FREISERS (autonomous search androids, equipped with telescopic cameras and turbo-laser cannon), GARKLAS CLONICOS (specialists in following trails through the swamp jungle) . . . a world full of dangers.
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imagine
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